

CREATING MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH
ADULT EDUCATION IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
HOMOGENEOUS CHURCH IN IDAHO

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ABSTRACT

CREATING MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH ADULT EDUCATION IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE HOMOGENEOUS CHURCH IN IDAHO

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Idaho is 93% White, but one local church exists in a more diverse community. This project offers adult students the opportunity to learn from diverse ministry professionals on the topics of culture, racism, privilege, fragility, and the church. Using the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale, multicultural awareness in areas of exploration, self-awareness, world orientation, relationship development, positive regard, and resilience are measured before and after instruction to test the effectiveness of this model of multicultural faith-based adult education. The goal is to increase multicultural awareness and prepare the local church to engage a culturally diverse community as its neighbors.

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With gratefulness and honor, acknowledgment is given for the dedication, support, and encouragement of The Reverend Dr. Duane Anders, colleague and mentor. Dr. Anders has offered many semesters of coaching and critique that have improved this work. Dr. Presian Burroughs served as a faculty consultant in the early stages of this work and contributed toward the formation of the project. The Reverend Dr. Adam Wirrig, Ph.D., a faculty consultant, offered extensive instruction and support through this process. It is through the dedication of these pastors and faculty that this work comes to fruition. Their teaching has been highly influential and effective.

Acknowledgement is also given to the participants in this study who offered their time, open hearts, and minds, ready to grow and learn. Most importantly, though, acknowledgment is given to the incredible servants of God whom I am blessed to call colleagues. These ministry professionals each taught a session during the research project, offering their personal and professional stories in a transparent, honest, and challenging manner. I acknowledge The Reverend Sunia Gibbs, The Reverend Joel Rodriguez, The Reverend Kelvin Sauls, The Reverend Dr. Kenneth Dantzler-Corbin, The Reverend Darryl Burton, and The Reverend John Go.

Finally, acknowledgement is given to my professional associates, The Reverend Dr. Nitos Dobles, The Reverend Kristina Gonzales, and Dr. Iain Sturrock. Each has provided extensive professional input into the project and final manuscript.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to the memory of those who have encouraged my journey to ministry including The Reverend Robert S. White, my maternal grandfather and Elder in the United Methodist Church as well as Bert White, my grandmother and dedicated servant of God who modeled what it meant to serve with love and grace. Robert Walters and Arlene Walters, my paternal grandparents, also modeled a life of faith, love, and grace for me as a child, teen, and young adult. All four, as well as my parents, Ray Walters and Kathy Musgrave, left a powerful impact on my faith journey.

This work is especially dedicated to my loving wife, Dr. Mary “Renee” Walters, Ph.D., who has patiently supported me as well as my son, Jacob Walters, and my adult daughter, Michelle Privette. Each family member has sacrificed through many semesters of my doctoral work, fully supported my journey, and believes strongly in the topic of multicultural awareness and love for all persons.

Finally, this work is dedicated to all those persons of color whose voices did not carry the privilege I experience today. Specifically, this work is dedicated to the family of The Reverend Dr. James Cone. Dr. Cone and I baptized his grandson together and a resulting interview sparked my increased interest in this important work. While he passed in 2018, I pray these words honor his sacrifice, example, and amplify his hope and faith.

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ABBREVIATIONS

IES	Intercultural Effectiveness Scale
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UMC	United Methodist Church

If integration means that each man meets the other on equal footing, with neither possessing the ability to assert the rightness of his style over the other, then mutual meaningful dialogue is possible. Biblically, this may be called the Kingdom of God.

-The Reverend Dr. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*

INTRODUCTION

Idaho is 93.0% Caucasian according to the United States Census Bureau,¹ yet the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies (AMITY) is a United Methodist Church located in a part of Boise, Idaho that is more culturally diverse than the rest of the state.² The Local church does not match the cultural make-up of this more culturally diverse area. The Amity Campus also struggles with sustainability. Evidence cited by Kevin Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, and Todd Ferguson in their *Social Forces* article, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990-2010,” shows that Methodist churches with internal racial diversity exhibit higher-than-average attendance.³ Hence, Amity’s path to sustainable attendance levels may lie in bringing more of its non-White neighbors into its cultural life.

It is in this context that a project designed to increase multicultural awareness through adult education in a predominantly White homogeneous church took place. Through this small-group adult education experience, six guest teachers increased the

¹ United States Census Bureau, *Quick Facts: Idaho*, www.census.gov (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013).

² “Full Insite Report,” <https://missioninsite.com> (Irvine, CA: Mission Insite, 2019).

³ Kevin D. Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, and Todd Ferguson, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990–2010,” *Social Forces*, Volume 100, Issue 1, September 2021, Pages 345–374, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaa124>

multicultural awareness of twenty-seven students as assessed by the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES).

This dissertation uses learnings from biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary frameworks as foundations for a research project. The biblical foundation is from Paul's letter to the Galatians where he wrote, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28 [*The New Revised Standard Version*]). Evidence cited in the biblical foundations chapter suggests that Paul was writing to an ethnically diverse congregation who shared a "Galatian" identity. Paul identifies the recipients of his letter as male-female, Jew-Gentile, and slave-free. Paul was not trying to discount the multicultural aspect of the Galatian culture or to deny the uniqueness of Jew-Greek, slave-free, and male-female in the body of Christ. Rather, he was calling the church to shift its identity from law to faith, from legalism to grace, and toward a shared identity in Christ.

For a predominantly White church that has failed to reflect the diversity of its neighborhood, this is a foundational message. Through connecting concepts of identity in Christ with multiculturalism, Paul's letter to the church at Galatia serves as a foundation for a project designed to increase multicultural awareness. Persons in the local church and community may not be stratified as Jew-Greek, slave-free, or male-female, but the need for a shared identity in Christ remains.

By creating opportunities to hear guest teachers, to connect on both an academic and a personal level, and by deeply valuing diverse cultures, a predominantly White church renewed its identification with what the church is called to be, and, at the same

time, improved its prospects for sustainability. The foundational learning is that culture must be addressed as a unique gift with multicultural awareness valued as a biblically-based blessing in which all persons can come together to find identity in Christ.

In addition to its biblical foundation, this project has a historical foundation, as well. As evidenced in the historical chapter, the Methodist Episcopal Church, a predecessor denomination from which the United Methodist church later emerged, had been challenged by John Wesley to reject slavery, but the implementation of anti-racist practices continued to be a challenge throughout the years. This resulted in Richard Allen, a former slave turned Methodist Episcopal Church pastor, leading a walkout that catalyzed the development of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. A study of this moment in history and Allen as the historical figure is foundational to this project as segregation, White supremacy, and racism caused the once racially diverse Methodist Episcopal Church to become a nearly all White church. This issue remains present today in its successor denomination, the United Methodist Church, as many nearly all White churches exist in neighborhoods that are not all White. United Methodist clergy and parishioners, especially those serving predominantly White congregations in predominantly White states, may faithfully believe that racism not a part of our denominational history. Study participants must become aware of a history of systemic racism in the Methodist Episcopal Church and its subsequent denominations, understand the core reason behind divisions in the church's early life, recognize how persons of color perceive an all-White church, and hear personal stories of the impact racism still has in United Methodist churches today. Doing so has the potential to increase awareness.

In addition to biblical and historical foundations, the project utilizes a theological foundation, as well. As evidenced by research for the theological chapter, liberation theology originated in Latino/a cultural and religious circles but quickly spread to other populations who experienced oppression within society and the church. Through a study of liberation theology with a focus on black liberation theology, there is evidence for a much-needed change in the theological framework of predominantly White churches.

Liberation theology calls the church to provide a Kingdom focus, efforts toward reconciliation and settings where Jesus' vision of human relationships can be more faithfully executed. This occurs when the local church learns to value the identity of persons of color, validates their stories, and changes systemic power systems. Liberation theology does not call the church to be multicultural because persons of color need the church, but because the White church needs to look more like the Kingdom of God in its challenge to the unjust execution of power. This doctoral project relies on this foundation in liberation theology. It embraces the emotive stories of persons of color while also seeing Jesus for what he was: a man whose divine nature was denied and who was executed by society. The integration of this theological foundation comes in a project that is designed to lift up voices of those the White church can devalue and thereby challenges systemic racism.

Finally, in addition to foundations that are biblical, historical, and theological, this dissertation project makes use of an interdisciplinary foundation. Academic study and exploration indicated a need for further adult education in the church in the area of multicultural awareness. This research involved considering what other ministry areas are

doing in this regard, as well as what is occurring in the secular world—specifically in the area of adult education related to culture and race.

Through this interdisciplinary research into adult education, multiple areas were identified, including remaining theologically open and hospitality-centered which prompted a need for a covenant of participation. Ministry research showed a need for purpose-driven discussion inspired by a common group goal—so the development of a biblically-centered methodology shaped by specific ethical imperatives was important. Most importantly, though, ministry research showed a strong need to intentionally value the identity and stories of speakers of color and to have White pastors in White churches address cultural bias and racism. Finally, contemporary ministry work modeled the importance of building group cohesion and practicing respectful dialogue by acting on how the other party to the conversation desires to be treated.

In examining interdisciplinary research in the field of adult education with a focus on race, evidence showed the need for diversification in speakers, a need to address anxiety in an open and honest way early on, and to create adequate time for reflection both with the guest speaker and without. Learnings as a result of this interdisciplinary examination were foundational to the project and were applied in the project phase.

The biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary research that has taken place served as a catalyst for a project based on those foundations, a project designed to increase multicultural awareness in a predominantly White homogeneous church in Idaho. The project, assessed through use of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES), determined whether adult students who are educated on issues of race, and its power dynamics in church and culture can increase their multicultural awareness.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

This doctoral project is a product of the synergy between my own personal faith journey and my ministry context as a United Methodist pastor. As a result, this chapter will first identify my context and key points within the history of the context that connect to this project. Next, attention will be given to the significant moments on my own personal faith journey that connect to this ministry context. This synergy is the source from which the doctoral work originates.

History of the Context

In the winter of 2015, an appointment opening appeared at Boise First United Methodist Church and focused on revitalizing its second campus. Basic research suggested that the second campus had declining attendance and there had been some tense times in the past. After extensive prayer, consultation, and visits, on July 1, 2016, I was appointed to this ministry context as a local church pastor.

The Cathedral of the Rockies is a product of the merger of Boise First United Methodist Church (UMC) and Amity UMC. Boise First was founded in 1872 by a fledgling group of forty-three, a full eighteen years before Idaho became a state. According to church documents, gold had brought adventure-seeking people to this new

territory, and the impulse to innovate was a strong part of their character.¹ Boise First United Methodist Church took shape in this social context.

In 1975, more than a century later, Amity UMC was founded as a house-church in the southwest portion of the Boise metro.² The founding preacher, Rev. Dr. Cox, moved from Boise First United Methodist Church to Amity UMC with a one-year commitment. The church grew quickly and was chartered in May of 1979 with seventy-five charter members who still met inside a home.³ Eventually, the church purchased a property at the corner of Tillamook Drive and Maple Grove Road for future use. The tradition began to refer to the church at the corner of Maple Grove as “Amity,” though Amity Road is actually a block further west.

The Reverend Dr. Steve Tollefson explained the history of the church in an interview. He said that, after one year, the Amity congregation thought they would retain Cox, and Boise First would waive the one-year expectation, but they changed direction and reappointed Cox as pastor at Boise First UMC.⁴

According to Rev. Dr. Tollefson, this “left a bitter taste in the mouths of some Amity UMC attendees toward Boise First, whom they perceived to be the cause of the loss of their pastor.”⁵ Rev. Dr. Steve Tollefson would follow Dr. Cox as pastor,

¹ Cathedral of the Rockies-Downtown, “About Us-Downtown,” <https://cathedraloftherockies.org/About-Us/Our-Story> (Boise, ID: Cathedral of the Rockies, 2018).

² Cathedral of the Rockies-Amity, “About Us-Amity,” <https://amity.cathedraloftherockies.org/Our-History> (Boise, ID: Cathedral of the Rockies, 2018).

³ “Amity Campus Moves Forward in Faith,” <https://www.umoi.org/newsdetail/109091>, Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church (Portland, OR: Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church, April 1, 2014).

⁴ Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters,” (Boise, ID: October 22, 2017).

⁵ Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

beginning on July 1, 1979. Rev. Dr. Tollefson's reception was less than cheerful. The congregation was filled with grief and frustration over the pastoral transition. Fifty-percent of the initial seventy-five charter members left. This marked the first church split—coming just one year after the church's founding.⁶

Nevertheless, the church was blessed with growth, and it moved its services to the nearby Lake Hazel Elementary School. During the first Easter worship at the school, the power was cut inadvertently, and the congregation illuminated the room with candelabras. From that moment on, the use of candelabras in worship became a symbol of perseverance for the new church. Describing the following years, The Rev. Dr. Tollefson said, "We recognized the need and importance in a building, a structure where you have a seven-day a week presence. Without it, you are invisible six days a week."⁷ Amity UMC built its first sanctuary in 1982, and the congregation reached an average worship attendance of 234.⁸

Tollefson led the church for eight years. The local church struggled, going through a series of two and three-year appointments and a decline of membership from 234 to ninety, then finally down to forty-five.⁹ While this change was not divisive, it was in practice a second church split. More than 60% of the church had departed—again, following a clergy transition.

⁶ Steve Tollefson, "Interview with Robert Walters."

⁷ Steve Tollefson, "Interview with Robert Walters."

⁸ Steve Tollefson, "Interview with Robert Walters."

⁹ Steve Tollefson, "Interview with Robert Walters."

In the years that followed, Amity UMC experienced variable attendance and vitality, declining to as low as twelve people in worship at its lowest point.¹⁰ During The Reverend Lisa Payton's appointment at Amity UMC, a new senior pastor arrived at Boise First UMC, Rev. Dr. Duane Anders. Dialog about a merger began.¹¹ The congregations affirmed the merger and became “One Church-Two Campuses.”¹²

In another church merger I experienced, the smaller site was shuttered for the transition, but here, consistent with the larger congregation’s desire to respect those worshipping at Amity UMC, the smaller site remained open during the merger process.¹³ A final worship experience was held for “Amity UMC,” then, one week later, the church became the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies. For some parishioners, there was confusion over whether this was a temporary or permanent arrangement. According to Tollefson, the Amity Campus attendees claimed a desire to return to vibrancy with a hope for vital, growing ministry after being helped through a difficult period.¹⁴ Tollefson, who had served at both Boise First UMC and Amity UMC in the past, was appointed as half-time pastor at Amity, and attendance quickly grew to 160.¹⁵

The revitalization and coming together of the churches created great enthusiasm and, within a year, a generous family, Dick and Barbara Heaton, presented the church

¹⁰ Lisa Payton, “Interview with Robert Walters,” (Boise, ID: October, 2017).

¹¹ Duane Anders, “Interview with Robert Walters,” (Boise, ID: September, 2017).

¹² Cathedral of the Rockies-Downtown, “About Us-Downtown.”

¹³ Lisa Payton, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

¹⁴ Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

¹⁵ Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

with a million-dollar gift and a challenge to build a sanctuary to house the expanding congregation; but the caveat was that it had to be built in before Mr. Heaton's death—which appeared to be near.¹⁶ Work on the new building moved quickly with a ground-breaking on Sunday, March 23, 2014.¹⁷ During the ceremony (according to an Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference publication), after each shovel of dirt, the congregation said, “With faith in Jesus Christ, this work is begun and this ground is broken in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, also known as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.”¹⁸ The Heaton Chapel became the new worship space for the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies on December 14, 2014.¹⁹

Though Dr. Tollefson retired, he agreed to serve as Pastor Emeritus at both campuses. New clergy were appointed and the church saw significant growth. During this time, ministries like “Impact,” a time of choir, art, drama, and dance for kids was launched. The People’s Garden, at the Amity Campus, generated 25,000 pounds for foodbanks, families in need, and the local neighborhood.

These ministries, among others, helped the church reach new disciples and increase worship attendance. Attendance went beyond 200 before the year was over.²⁰

¹⁶ Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

¹⁷ Duane Anders, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

¹⁸ “Amity Campus Moves Forward in Faith.”

¹⁹ “Amity Campus Celebrates New Chapel and New Life!”
<https://www.umoi.org/newsdetail/786319>, Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church (Portland, OR: Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church, February 9, 2015).

²⁰ “Amity Campus Moves Forward in Faith.”

Amity experienced a dramatic re-start filled with life and new ministry, thriving as a local church within a multi-campus congregation.

According to Rev. Dr. Duane Anders, “a key component to success in multi-campus ministry is shared DNA.”²¹ He explains, “We need to have a similar mission and vision in order to successfully work together.”²² For a period of time, it seemed this “DNA” was present, and two campuses were connected, pursuing a common vision. Then, the Amity Campus faced another crisis arising from a clergy transition—the third such divisive transition in the history of the forty-year-old church—according to Jim Dawson, an initial charter member of the former Amity UMC.²³ According to Rev. Dr. Tollefson, the transition began with some lack of clarity, but great latitude for campus leadership. The process, however, culminated in a campus pastor who asked to separate the newly connected campuses.²⁴ The vision to divide the newly-connected campus resulted in another clergy transition and an eventual church split. Fifty-percent of the Amity families left, many landing in a new house-church led by the departing pastor. A number of others ended their church affiliation altogether.²⁵

The remaining attendees, most of whom were seniors, faced uncertainty, financial instability, and a decreasing missional focus. At one point, children completely

²¹ Cathedral of the Rockies-Downtown, “About Us-Downtown.”

²² Cathedral of the Rockies-Downtown, “About Us-Downtown.”

²³ Jim Dawson, “Interview with Robert Walters,” (Boise, ID: September, 2017).

²⁴ Rev. Dr. Steve Tollefson, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

²⁵ Duane Anders, “Interview with Robert Walters.”

disappeared from the congregation. After one year of rotating pulpit supply, I was appointed to the Cathedral of the Rockies with responsibility for the Amity Campus.

With three church splits in less than fifty years, the church had seen significant trauma. It was evident that the community surrounding the church had changed in that time, too, so demographic research into the neighborhood was conducted.

The Amity campus was in a part of the metro area that was rural and conservative. The area around the downtown campus was more urban and progressive. The homes surrounding the Amity Campus ranged from small farmhouses and small homes in the 40-50-year-old range to new-built suburban homes with average and below-average home prices. In the year prior to the writing of this chapter, over 100 homes were built within one mile of the campus. According to Jim Dawson, the changing demographics were disorienting to the congregation.²⁶

A comprehensive study of the neighborhood around the Amity Campus showed multiple generations living within the community. According to Mission Insite Reports, as of 2017, five distinct generations could be identified within five miles of the church:

Millennial (birth from 1982-2004): 27.35% of the population

Gen X (birth from 1961 to 1981): 39.9% of the population

Boomer (birth from 1946-1960): 21.81% of the population

Silent (birth from 1925-1945): 9.57% of the population

General Issue (birth from 1901-1924): 1.37% of the population

²⁶ Jim Dawson, “Interview with Robert Walters,” (Boise, ID: September, 2017).

The same report predicted that the Homeland Generation (born from 2005-2025) would be the largest group—at 30.94%—by the year 2027.²⁷ The report stated that 80.61% of those living within a five-mile area from the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies lived in a family household while 18.05% lived in a non-family household and 1.34% lived in any other type of group situation.²⁸ Most neighborhood residents were living under one roof as families, so ministry to children was critical, especially since Amity hosted no children at all on some Sundays. The local church was not matching the demographics of the community around it.

The Boise metropolitan area, at the time of this research, was facing a significant housing price increase. Housing costs southwest of downtown Boise, where Amity was located, were among the most affordable in the area. This factor increased the likelihood that young families would move into the five-mile radius around the church, lacking the means to buy elsewhere.

Touring the neighborhood and speaking to community members, I encountered a level of cultural diversity that was absent from the church where I was appointed. I observed that while Idaho was dominated by White people, Boise had welcomed many refugees as evidenced by the presence of organizations like the International Rescue Mission whose primary mission was to support the relocation of refugees. Many of these first-generation families attended the Amity Campus food pantry on a weekly basis but did not engage with the church beyond that day.

²⁷ “Full Insite Report.”

²⁸ “Full Insite Report.”

The following data from the Full Insite Report supported my observations. The ethnic make-up of the community included Asian persons at 2.79%, Black/African American persons at 1.35%, White persons at 83.87%, Hispanic/Latino persons at 8.67%, and Pacific Islander, American Indian, or those selecting “other” at 3.33%.²⁹ These observations coupled with supporting demographic data indicated the church needed to place a focus on issues related to diversity, racism, injustice, and minister with an intentionality to reach the non-White population in the area.

Significantly, 80.43% of the population identified as “English-only” speakers, less than the state-wide average.³⁰ The most common second language was Spanish, at 5.34%, followed by Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Slavic languages each making up less than 1%.³¹

This general quantitative evidence was an imprecise guide, however, to the religious makeup of the neighborhoods nearest to Amity. For example, in visiting with the neighbors in person, I learned through discussion that a significant number of those within five miles of the Amity Campus practiced Islam. This fact and others suggested that a focus on culturally inclusive ministry would not only benefit the community but also those who call the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies, “home.”

Other religious thematic considerations were important, too. In a 2019 “Religious Insite Report,” 50.6% of respondents agreed that, “Jesus belief does not require participation in a church.”³² Given the mission of the UMC was, in part, to make

²⁹ “Full Insite Report.”

³⁰ “Full Insite Report.”

³¹ “Full Insite Report.”

³² “Religious Insite Report,” <https://missioninsite.com> (Irvine, CA: Mission Insite, 2019).

disciples of Jesus Christ, this data indicated that the Amity Campus existed in a community where over one-half of the population within five miles did not feel a need to be a part of the mission to which the Amity Campus was committed. Even more concerning, 31.7% of those within five miles of the campus said they strongly or somewhat agreed that, “Jesus is not like his followers in the Church” and 43.6% said they had “no opinion” regarding the statement.³³ This led to the conclusion that the Amity Campus would require significant work to be done if the immediate community was to see the local church as vital.

Discussing this qualitative and quantitative data with clergy and lay persons, the ministry problem became evident. The Amity Campus needed to embrace change within the local church post-merger and simultaneously embrace change in the community surrounding the campus. A deeper awareness of the neighborhood was critical to both of these challenges. A shifting demographic makeup of the Amity Campus was needed which involved moving from a mostly senior White population to one that was multicultural. The first step was to name the need for multicultural awareness in three primary areas:

1. A deeper spiritual health around change within the body of Christ and engagement with the community was needed.
2. A shift in ministry from small homogeneous groups of senior adults to ministry across multiple generations with a focus on families was needed.

³³ “Religious Insite Report.”

3. A focus on inclusivity in the body of Christ reflecting the age make-up and ethnic make-up of the neighborhood that surrounds it was critical.

These contextual areas, coupled with my own ministry journey, formed the goals and theme for this Doctor of Ministry project.

Personal Ministry Journey

I claim a Methodist heritage as the maternal great-grandson and grandson of Methodist pastors. My great grandfather was a circuit rider who moved from church to church on horseback. His son, my grandfather, sang with the opera and then also became a Methodist pastor. He was present at the 1968 Uniting Conference where he became United Methodist clergy formally. I became aware of this history when I was ordained. I only knew my maternal great grandmother through her name and a single photograph. She died when I was a baby but, her daughter (my grandmother) was a Christian educator in a time when there were few women in the pulpit. If she had served in a preaching role, my grandmother would have been an excellent pastor, preacher, and church leader in an ordained capacity. My faith journey began amidst such family members: men and women who saw faith as critical to my life.

In addition to the faith heritage that preceded my birth, I was influenced by church experiences during childhood. I grew up in Galesburg, Illinois—a town founded by George Washington Gale. According to history documents, the town was the vision of a Presbyterian minister who established a college focused on manual labor, later named

Knox College.³⁴ It was a fitting location, given that Galesburg drew significant wealth from a railroad line tying Chicago to the towns of Quincy, Iowa, and Burlington, Iowa. Nearly every family I knew had someone working for the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (which later became the BNSF Railway). My father was a railroad engineer, and the life of an engineer in those days was not easy. With no regular sleep schedule, only 24 hours home at a time, and frequent long trips, I got to see my father only occasionally—sometimes getting to ride the rails with him. Prior to the significant safety and security concerns of today, I was permitted to perch on the engine and witnessed how my father drove a train before I learned how to drive a car. While such times were few, they remain profound memories.

My father was (and still is) a devout Christian. Those early experiences offered opportunities to learn from a parent who enjoyed teaching scripture. Whether it was at home, on a train, or elsewhere, I was provided with innumerable opportunities to learn about faith. I learned about God in the context of my family life, even moreso than in church. This aspect of my experience influences my doctoral work. Ministry across generations was key to my personal faith formation so the relative absence at Amity of multicultural ministry across generations is more conspicuous to me.

Growing up, I spent significant time attending churches with my family. Some of those churches were pastored by my grandfather, The Rev. Dr. Robert S. White. He was a United Methodist elder, a member of the former Central Illinois Annual Conference

³⁴ "History of Galesburg," http://www.ci.galesburg.il.us/city_initiatives/historic_preservation/ (Galesburg, IL: City of Galesburg, 2017).

(which no longer exists), and performed my “first” baptism. He used water he had brought from the Holy Land. I have fond memories of seeing my grandfather’s churches. They were in areas that were usually diverse ethnically, culturally, and economically. A graduate of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, he served both small and large churches. My grandmother, Bert White, focused on ministry for young people and specialized in a “clown ministry” that would eventually become multi-generational. I remember putting on my grandpa’s stoles and robes (some of which hang in my closet today) and considering future ministry even as a young child. This was long before I understood what it meant to be called by God.

These early experiences, particularly with church diversity, inform my doctoral interests. Growing up in a culturally heterogeneous church was formational. I saw ministry through a multicultural lens as a young person and now feel called to serve in churches where the congregation is reflective of all persons in the community.

Another spur to my faith development was the traditional theology I conversed with while participating in the life of a small, Southern Baptist church. At the time, I did not understand that this theology was built upon the inerrancy of scripture, a substitutionary theory of atonement, and was highly sin-repentance-forgiveness-driven in nature. I was living blissfully in the prevenient grace of God, unaware of journeys to come. Though baptized as an infant, I would grow in faith in that small church, study in a pre-teen class for future members, and, in Southern Baptist tradition, undergo a second baptism through immersion.

My faith journey then took another formational step. My parents separated, and attitudes toward divorcees in the 1970’s made my participation in the local church

challenging. We experienced unfair judgements toward my family and me. Later, the pastor of that church departed due to allegations of misconduct. This moment further emphasized for me the need for the church to be less judgmental and inclusive of all persons.

In my eyes, the church injured its relevancy by failing to respond to human need in such instances. My heart needed a church home, but my church home acted capriciously—damaging my trust and faith. As I now encounter a neighborhood where over half of the people see the church as unnecessary stating church people do not look like Jesus, there is an echo from my past experience. I have been inspired to respond hopefully to that state of affairs through these doctoral efforts.

In the months after our departure from that local church, I experienced multiple faith traditions and denominations as my family searched for a new church home. Those explorations informed and exposed me to the experience of faith in other traditions. I experienced increased diversity in ethnicity, doctrine, ritual, and ministry styles. Having some knowledge of the breadth of spiritual and secular culture, I am called to guide and inspire the Amity Campus to reach out to the surrounding community.

When I was sixteen, First United Methodist Church of Olathe, Kansas took a chance on me and hired me as a part-time music director. The church valued young leaders. This was where I experienced my first merger between churches. Faith United Methodist Church and First United Methodist Church merged to become Grace United Methodist Church and struggled with the trials of such a merger. This was formative to me as a teenager and informs my doctoral research today as I work with a church that has struggled through change resulting from a merger.

Years later, the same church experienced a church split, triggered when some congregants were unwilling to accept an LGBTQIA person on staff. As a young adult, without much theological understanding, I experienced my first brush with the UMC's disagreement over persons serving in ministry who were LGBTQI. I watched people who I knew and loved, who were mentors and friends, and who had shaped me, depart the church.

In college, I studied music education and was exposed to great diversity in musicians and music—including music spanning multiple ethnicities. I was blessed with professors and fellow musicians from multiple countries, with unique backgrounds, and unique ideas. After completing a degree, I served as a music teacher for many years, working in culturally diverse areas with a large number of refugee and Title 1 students. This deep exposure to the tremendous value of multicultural settings was foundational for me and called me to love people of other cultures deeply. This was a catalyst behind the identification of multicultural ministry as a passion.

My journey continued as I spent time studying at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center and served as a police officer. This was a formational experience from an educational perspective, but it also broadened my understanding of multicultural communities. Working in the inner-city called me to further recognize the value of diversity and more directly face the privilege from which I had benefitted, unknowingly, for so much of my life. The work I was called to did not always feel like “justice.” Rather, I observed first-hand that persons of color in the system faced a much more difficult battle than I had ever realized. This is why, a decade later, this doctoral work involves multicultural awareness in the local church. We must work as a church to truly

welcome all and, to the extent possible, rid ourselves of the White privilege that blinds our ability to see true justice.

After a time in law enforcement, I accepted a music staff position and was later appointed to a clergy role at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. Serving at this large, multi-site church with campuses in different socio-economic areas integrated my music with my calling to ministry. Over time, I was able to see dynamic ministry take place across racial, cultural, and socio-economic lines leading to a productive time of personal and professional growth. I came to know this context well but was also blessed to serve as lead pastor of two other smaller churches in the urban and suburban Kansas City areas, both offering unique views of ministry across cultures.

While serving as a pastor, I completed a Master of Divinity degree from the Saint Paul School of Theology with a specialization in Prison Ministry and Restorative Justice which, by its very nature, involves multicultural awareness. These experiences and formalized theological education further informed my understanding of the church's role in defeating oppression as evidenced in our membership vows. The United Methodist Book of Discipline cites these vows in paragraph 217 where we promise: "To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of sin; and, to accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression."³⁵ Unfortunately, prior to my time in law enforcement, large church ministry, and seminary, I did not recognize the full weight of those promises.

³⁵ "United Methodist Book of Discipline: Membership Vows," <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/book-of-discipline-para-217-membership-vows>, United Methodist Publishing House (Nashville, TN, 2016), paragraph 217.

After some growing and learning time in Kansas City, I accepted a pastoral position at the Cathedral of the Rockies in Boise, Idaho. It was a long-distance move and taught me that serving in the West was a significant change from my previous appointments at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection and two smaller churches. Ministry in the Midwest was about creating an attractive place for people who already had a desire to attend in a church setting where they would encounter Christ. Churches were diverse in terms of age and ethnicity. Ministry at Church of the Resurrection, specifically, was about creating a place where non-religious and nominally-religious people could become deeply committed Christians. This appointment in the West, though, was new to me. It quickly became apparent that reaching persons for Christ in this new population required a need to study a very new context. After all, the entire state of Idaho had a smaller population than the Kansas City metro area. Idaho lacked racial diversity, as well, and offered an opportunity for increasing diverse ministry. This culture was one that did not begin with creating attractive ministry as it did in the Midwest. Rather, it began with establishing why ministry was needed at all.

In my first year of the appointment, it became apparent that if the Amity Campus parishioners did not explore the multicultural nature of our neighborhood, they would never fully understand the membership promises as a church and likely not grow in a significant way. As I experienced on my own faith journey, it was nearly impossible for me to recognize oppression fully when it was right in front of me when I lacked a multicultural paradigm. As I consider my gifts and background for this context, I recognize the unique need and blessing of a deepening spiritual health in the body of Christ, a shift in ministry from small groups of homogeneous adults to a multicultural

ministry that reflects the neighborhood. I believe God has equipped me to begin this journey with the people I am called to serve.

Synergy Realized

When I came to the Cathedral of the Rockies, I was drawn to the vision statement, “All means all.” This vision connected with my heart as I saw God leading me to explore a context where my personal experience and the context overlapped one another. When considered together, this synergy of my spiritual development and my ministry context today forms the basis for my doctoral work, a project designed to draw the circle wider in the neighborhood around the Amity Campus.

Dr. Jacqueline Thompson, a writer for *UMC Discipleship* wrote an article entitled, “History of Hymns: ‘Draw the Circle Wide,’” written for Discipleship Ministries. She said the lyrics of the chorus “bring to mind that, in a circle, all points are the same distance from the center . . . when in the circle, all are visible to one another—no one stands alone.”³⁶ In the context in which I serve, the body of Christ must be highly inclusive of the community, thereby seeking justice. This local context (like many United Methodist Churches) has an imbalance of ages, an imbalance of ethnicity, an imbalance of race, an imbalance of power, and a staleness in the work of the body of Christ for justice. My background has taught me that transformation begins with diversity of thought, diversity of age, diversity of belief, diversity of background, diversity of ethnicity, and diversity of calling. Multicultural awareness is critical.

³⁶ Jacqueline Thompson, “History of Hymns: ‘Draw the Circle Wide,’” <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/history-of-hymns-draw-the-circle-wide> (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Ministries, 2021).

The song explained by Dr. Jacqueline Thompson was composed by Gordon Light, copyrighted by Common Cup, and then copyrighted by Abingdon Press in 2008 after being set to a new tune.³⁷ Gordon Light described his music as having “a range of concerns including peace, justice and refugee issues, personal faith, and spirituality.”³⁸ Marc Miller later wrote a new melody with Dr. Marcia McFee as she prepared for the United Methodist General Conference of 2008.³⁹ Dr. McFee shared that it was a response to a particularly tense day there, and would later be sung at the composer’s celebration of life.⁴⁰ The chorus is a call to open our churches, our discussions, and our hearts to multi-cultural awareness:

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still,
 Let this be our song: no one stands alone
 Standing side by side. Draw the circle wide.⁴¹

In the ministry context at the Amity Campus, drawing the circle wide calls the local church to be more open, to be more welcoming, and to make every person visible. Such expansion has slowed, and the circle had become smaller and smaller through church splits and a struggle to change. This is where my own background and the context in which I served intersected to form this doctoral work. It was where my love for music,

³⁷ Jacqueline Thompson.

³⁸ Jacqueline Thompson.

³⁹ Marcia McFee, “Resources for Draw the Circle Wide Series,” <http://worshipdesignstudio.com/wdsHome/uploads/6303/brainstorm/Resources%20for%20Draw%20the%20Circle%20Wide%20Series%20reduced%20file%20size.pdf> (San Anselmo, CA: Worship Design Studio, 2015).

⁴⁰ Marcia McFee.

⁴¹ Gordon Light, “Draw the Circle Wide,” <http://www.commoncup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Draw-Circle.pdf> (Winnipeg, Canada: Common Cup, 1998).

my experience in church splits, mergers, the pain of being rejected by some faith traditions, and a love for multicultural ministry intersected. The Doctor of Ministry project outlined in this manuscript was focused on widening the circle.

Through completion of the research, the goal for the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies was to develop a higher level of multicultural awareness so it might become more invitational to the neighborhood around it—a neighborhood filled with young families and senior adults, a neighborhood with a diversity of beliefs, and a neighborhood with a diversity of races and ethnicities. The Amity context in which I served had parishioners who expressed a deep desire to reach out, but were sometimes unsure how to do so effectively. They were also unsure how to increase their multicultural awareness. Adult education was used to impact their awareness. This connected to my background and training as a teacher.

The local context in which I serve needed to resist the tendency to maintain its cultural homogeneity. It gained an opportunity to develop multicultural awareness through adult education. The synergy between my personal experience and the context for ministry in which I served is a desire to move from judged and divisive to open and affirming. This doctoral research and project were designed to make this body of Christ one whose doors are truly open to all—not just in words, but in actions. By creating educational opportunities for a predominantly White church in Idaho to develop increased multicultural awareness, the goal was to move the church as the body of Christ one step closer to representing the community which surrounded the church buildings.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Beyond a personal faith background and the ministry context of the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies, a biblical foundation formed the beginning of this doctoral project. This chapter utilizes a portion of Paul's letter to the church at Galatia as a support for increasing multicultural awareness. The chapter connects the concepts of identity in Christ with multiculturalism and challenges the church to more fully reflect the community in which it sits.

According to the United States Census Bureau, Idaho was 93.0% White at the time of this research.¹ This lack of diversity was coupled with actions in state government that devalued multiculturalism and supported systemic racism. A recent example was cited in a 2020 article by the Associated Press printed by *US News and World Report* entitled, "Idaho Governor Signs Affirmative Action Ban Into Law."² This action "negates another section prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or age." As a consequence, the state lost federal funding.³ Despite such expressions

¹ United States Census Bureau, *Quick Facts: Idaho*, www.census.gov (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013).

² Associated Press, *Idaho Governor Signs Affirmative Action Ban Into Law* (Washington DC: US News and World Report, 2020), <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/idaho/articles/2020-03-31/idaho-governor-signs-affirmative-action-ban-into-law>.

³ Associated Press, *Idaho Governor Signs Affirmative Action Ban Into Law*.

of racism, local organizations such as Boise State Public Radio ran spots encouraging people to take racism seriously. One such radio spot and corresponding in-print article entitled, “Why Idaho’s Racist History Matters” a multi-episode statement about systemic racism and White supremacy in the state was offered.⁴ Therefore, a biblical foundation supporting the need for increased multicultural awareness in a predominantly White Idaho church was required.

Christena Cleveland, in her book, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, says, “Our identity crises are a root cause of the divisions in the body of Christ.”⁵ Cleveland suggests that a war waged with our own identity is responsible for the divisions in our society. She argues that the church can be its own worst enemy when it comes to seeking multicultural expression. The very pursuit of such multiculturalism calls into question ideas of identity. Cleveland says, “We need to adopt the belief that *to be a follower of Christ* means to care deeply about and pursue other followers of Christ, including the ones that we don’t instinctively value or like.”⁶ In order to truly model being a multicultural body of Christ, the people of the Amity Campus needed to set aside an existing idea of self, seek identity in Christ, and build new connections in the neighborhood.

The biblical foundation for this multicultural awareness project began with reading Dr. Ian Scott, associate professor of New Testament at Tyndale Seminary, who

⁴ Frankie Barnhill, *Why Idaho’s Racist History Matters: Part 1* (Boise, ID: Boise State Public Radio, 2020), <https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/post/why-idahos-racist-history-matters-part-1#stream/0>.

⁵ Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 81.

⁶ Cleveland, 97.

connected the Apostle Paul's writing to multiculturalism in an article entitled, "Paul and God's Multicultural Mission." In reference to Galatians 3:28, he writes, "Paul's mission was to announce that God's rescue in Christ was for [the Gentiles] too . . . that the old boundaries are coming down."⁷

Through biblical exegesis, this chapter explores connections between Paul's letter to the church at Galatia and multiculturalism. It highlights the challenge with the local church claiming identity in Christ yet finding identity in separateness. This biblical foundation led to a doctoral project that was designed to equip the congregation for increased multicultural awareness in the community through adult education.

Identifying the Pericope

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28 NRSV). Despite this focal verse, determining the literary boundaries of this text required internal study. From verse twenty-three through verse twenty-nine, Paul was writing to a named people, the Galatians, about a single topic: the church's response to the arrival of "faith." The pericope selected for this chapter and subsequent project is Galatians 3:23-28. It reads:

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore, the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is

⁷ Ian Scott, "Paul and God's Multicultural Mission," *Mission Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* (Murfreesboro, TN: Missio Dei Foundation, 2018), 3.

no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:23-28, NRSV).

Socio-Cultural Context of the Letter

This pericope came from the larger letter from Paul to the Galatian people. To analyze its meaning, study of the socio-cultural situation of the recipients was needed. Paul's audience is "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2, NRSV). In Galatians 3:1, he reproaches them as, "foolish Galatians" (Gal. 3:1, NRSV). This suggests the audience was not gaining Paul's favor at that historical moment.

In the midst of commentarial research, study was undertaken into who these people were. Richard Longenecker, in *Galatians*, writes, "In Paul's day, the Roman province of Galatia stretched throughout the heart of Asia Minor, from Pontus on the Black Sea to Pamphylia on the Mediterranean."⁸ Considering this expansive geography, identifying the specific recipients is important if a connection between Paul's words and a multicultural mission is to be made.

Wayne Meeks, in the book, *The Writings of St. Paul: The Revised Standard Version Introductions and Annotations and Critical Essays*, questions if Paul used the term "Galatia" properly.⁹ According to Meeks, Galatia could refer to an area comprised by the old Celtic tribal Kingdom in north central Asia Minor whose capital is Ancyra (present-day Ankara, Turkey).¹⁰ Meeks suggests it could also refer to the Roman province which included the Celtic tribal kingdom but extended much further south to

⁸ Richard Longenecker, *Galatians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), lxiii.

⁹ Meeks, *The Writings*. 10.

¹⁰ Meeks, *The Writings*. 10.

include Lycaonia. This is the “North Galatian position.”¹¹ Finally, Meeks suggests the more localized area around Ancrya is more likely but admits that Paul has given us no sure clues.¹²

Some insight into this question can be found in the story of Ancrya’s origins. According to Colin Hemer in “Acts and Galatians Reconsidered,” in *Themelios* 2, the ethnic makeup of Ancrya in Pauls’ time was strongly affected by King Nicomedes of Bithynia from 287 to 278 BCE.¹³ Mercenary Celts had crossed into Asia with him, but they broke off from his army and destroyed nearby cities and states.¹⁴ According to Hemer, they were defeated c. 230 BCE by Attalus I, king of Pergamum, and confined to a territory in North Central Antolia, very near Ancrya. Hemer explains, “These people were of the same stock as the Celts of Gaul (France), and their territory, once part of Phrygia, became known as ‘Galatia,’ the Greek for ‘Gaul.’”¹⁵

The Celts were described by other commentators, too. F. F Bruce, in *Galatian Problems: North or South Galatians*, describes the Celts as people who, through conquering the area around Ancrya, came into conflict with the Roman authorities.¹⁶ Their language was not initially Greek, but came to be so through this conflict.¹⁷ Bruce clarifies that these persons were Greek-speakers, but not Greeks, *per se*.

¹¹ Meeks, *The Writings*. 10.

¹² Meeks, *The Writings*. 10.

¹³ Colin Hemer, “Acts and Galatians Reconsidered,” *Themelios* 2, no. 3 (1977), 82.

¹⁴ Colin Hemer, 82.

¹⁵ Colin Hemer, 82.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Galatian Problems* (Manchester, England: The John Rylands Library, 1970), 244.

¹⁷ F. F. Bruce, 244.

A key commentator to support the North Galatian position is J. B. Lightfoot. In his text, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, he questions whether the word “Galatia” had an ethnographical or a political meaning.¹⁸ This is a critical question for this doctoral project, as it seeks to define whether the Galatians were distinctive because of their ethnicity or politics. Lightfoot defines the area occupied by the Gauls as a comparatively small district called “Galatia” proper, and says it was different than the *territory* of “Galatia” claimed as a Roman province.¹⁹ Regarding Lightfoot’s argument for the Northern Galatian position, Bruce states there were few, if any, authors prior to Lightfoot’s time advocating for anything but a Northern Galatian position.²⁰ Bruce asserts that the North Galatia position was firmly supported in the historical criticism field and had remained unchallenged until the 18th century.²¹

Regarding the Northern Galatian theory, Douglas Moo, Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein, in *Galatians*, explain the word “Galatia” had multiple meanings in the first century.²² As a potential response to Lightfoot’s statement that Galatia could have had either an ethnographical or a political meaning,²³ Moo, Yarbrough, and Stein say, “In Paul’s day, then, ‘Galatia’ had both an ethnic/geographical and a political/geographical

¹⁸ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 18.

¹⁹ Lightfoot, *The Epistles*. 18.

²⁰ Bruce, *Galatian Problems*. 249.

²¹ Bruce, *Galatian Problems*, 247.

²² Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, edited by Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3117394> (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013) 4.

²³ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, 18.

referent.²⁴ Moo, Yarbrough, and Stein claim that Lightfoot, a Brit, and the German commentators generally prefer the Northern Galatian position, but Moo, Yarbrough, and Stein argue for the Southern Galatian position. They use as evidence the fact that Paul specifically mentions the South Galatian cities of (Pisidian) Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra in 2 Timothy 3:11 and never refers to cities in north-central Galatia.²⁵

W. M. Ramsay in *Historical Commentary on Galatians* advocates a Southern Galatian theory and states that, prior to the time of his writing, little thought had been given to this theory.²⁶ He writes, “Only in the Roman colonies, which were planted in a few cities of Southern Galatia were there bodies of Roman citizens, speaking Latin, practising [sic] Roman ways, electing magistrates with Roman titles, and judged under Roman law.”²⁷ Ramsay argued that under this question of north vs. south “lies the great subject of Christianisation [sic] of the entire inner Asia minor, the relation of the new religion to the older religion, society and education of those many regions and countries.”²⁸ This Southern Galatian position, then, provides a clue to the multicultural dynamics at play when Paul wrote his letter.

Herman Ridderbos, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, takes a particularly firm stance. He asserts that the letter was addressed only to churches which Paul himself

²⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, 4

²⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, 4

²⁶ W. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899). 3.

²⁷ Ramsay, A Historical Commentary. 182.

²⁸ Ramsay, A Historical Commentary, 9.

founded, including Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe—thus supporting the Southern Galatian position.²⁹ Ridderbos argues that Galatians 1:8 suggests that Paul was preaching alongside others. If the North Galatian position is adopted, Galatians 1:8 would refer to Silas and Timothy as his colleagues. If the Southern Galatian position is adopted, his preaching colleague would be Barnabas.³⁰ In this more general commentary, Ridderbos is in agreement with Ramsay's much more specific commentary. Ramsay sarcastically asserts the Northern Galatian Theory was only possible because of the obscurity of the subject and the general misapplication of historical facts.³¹

A final consideration comes in John Dow's *The Abingdon Bible Commentary: Galatians*. He suggests only the Southern Galatian position is viable, given the terminology used by the Romans at the time of Paul's letter.³² Further, he suggests Paul's habit was to use Roman provincial titles. This is evidenced in his Asia references as well as in the reference to Achaia from 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 1.³³ Dow also cites the fact that Rome had taken the name of the Kingdom of Galatia and applied it to a larger province. Apparently, Paul had a special love for these areas from his first missionary journey and, as a result, may have chosen to pay special attention to them in his correspondence.³⁴

²⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Cambridge, England: J. & C. F. Clay at the University Press, 1865), 13.

³⁰ Ridderbos, *The New International Commentary*, 13-14.

³¹ Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary*, 8.

³² John Dow, *The Abingdon Bible Commentary: Galatians* edited Frederick Eiselen, Edwin Lewis, and David Downey (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1929), 1207.

³³ Dow, *The Abingdon*, 1207.

³⁴ Dow, *The Abingdon*, 1207.

Dow's assertion is plausible given phrases such as "You foolish Galatians" (Gal. 3:1, *NRSV*). This phraseology makes sense if Paul had a relationship of deep understanding with the people—or at least deep enough to share such a sentiment. This chastisement and its fatherly tone would only be employed by someone with an established connection to a people. Dow also conjectures that "the Galatians" could include the ethnic Kingdom of Galatia near Ancyra.³⁵

Every scholar read in preparing this chapter, though, shares that defining the specific recipient is, at best, problematic, and no definite conclusion can be reached. That said, most of the current scholarship reviewed supports the Southern Galatian theory.

In examining biblical sources external to Galatians, Acts 16: 6 says, "They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6, *NRSV*). Bruce argues that the Northern Galatian position contradicts this statement. In his opinion, Paul was probably addressing the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.³⁶

This argument is important to the topic of this chapter and its subsequent doctoral project as Paul was addressing a group of persons who did not share a common ethnicity but were rather "Galatian" as a result of political assignment and culture. In comparison with the pericope chosen for this chapter, it is clear that much of Paul's writing was in comparing groups: male-female, Jew-Gentile, and slave-free. These diverse identities were highly significant in how these persons received this letter.

³⁵ Dow, *The Abingdon*, 1208.

³⁶ Bruce, *Galatian Problems*, 266.

Having framed an understanding of who Paul might have been writing to, attention turns to the letter's timeframe. The culture of the people defined by the word "Galatian" is indicated by the timeframe in which this letter was written. Galatians 4:13, just after the chosen pericope for this chapter, says, "I first announced the gospel to you" (Gal. 4: 13, NRSV). This implies Paul has visited more than once. "First announced" (Gal. 4:13, NRSV) implies a second visit. John Dow suggests the journey of Acts 13 and 14 could be his first and second visits. Accepting this conjecture, Paul's letter could have been written any time after his first missionary journey—between 48 and 50 CE.³⁷

Research for this chapter identified no commentators who questioned Paul's authorship. As a result, no focus is given in this chapter to the discussion of alternative authors. Be that as it may, William Barclay in *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians: Revised Edition*, suggests that many of Paul's letters were dictated to a scribe who, in some cases was identified in scripture and, in other cases, remained anonymous.³⁸ It is possible Paul's words were filtered through another person's writing. Barclay suggests that, if this was true, it might explain the writing's challenging nature. There are sentences that begin but never end and thoughts that are never finished.³⁹ Many aspects of Paul's expression are debated in the commentaries, including, but not limited to: 1) The text found on papyrus scraps in existence today, 2) What Paul actually said to the scribe who wrote transcribed the words, 3) How Paul's first-century Greek should be

³⁷ Dow, The Abingdon, 1208.

³⁸ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, Revised Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), xiv.

³⁹ William Barclay, xiv.

translated, and, 4) How commentators should interpret these translated words.⁴⁰ As a result, the impact of a scribe is not to be underestimated.

Mark Nanos, in *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context*, writes, “If we understand Paul to be the historical figure who wrote this letter to groups of people somewhere in Galatia-among whom, according to this letter, he had proclaimed the good news of Christ at an earlier time, although now removed from them by some distance-then we take it to be a letter to groups of historical people and not merely a fictional discourse.”⁴¹ In other words, the letter was intended as a replacement for a face-to-face conversation that was not possible at the time. The letter is a representation of relationship in some form (much the opposite of today’s streamed sermon online during the pandemic) It is from a specific person, Paul, to specific people, with whom he seemed to have a deep relationship.

Having discussed the cultural affinities of the recipient, the author, the time period, and the relationship involved in Galatians 3:23-28, attention turns to the circumstances in the early church that caused Paul to use the words he chose. It is clear Paul felt a need to define his role as an apostle, attempting to encourage trust in his words. This is evidenced in Galatians 1:1 which begins, “Paul an apostle-sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead-and all the members of God’s family...” (Gal. 1:1, NRSV).

⁴⁰ William Barclay, xiv.

⁴¹ Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 47

Meeks, in *The Writings of St. Paul*, argues that there had been a direct challenge to Paul's apostolate throughout the Southern Galatian region and, as a result, another group of missionaries had visited the churches preaching "a different gospel than the one proclaimed by Paul."⁴² Meeks says the other missionaries accused Paul of watering down the requirements of Christianity in order to please himself and others, calling into question not only the content of faith, but also Paul's apostleship.⁴³ Cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles gave these arguments their unique impetus with Judaic law at the center of the argument.

Circumcision, the Jewish and Hellenistic festival calendars, Paul's apostolic credentials, and whether the whole of Jewish law ought to be obeyed, were all at issue, according to Meeks. He calls the missionaries opposed to Paul, "Judaizers."⁴⁴ Dr. Krister Stendahl, the author of *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* affirms this designation. He writes, "There were those...who would reject [Paul's] direct apostolic authority and demand that such apostleship must be granted him by higher human authorities."⁴⁵ Paul was attempting to resolve this culture clash in his letter.

The New International Version: Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible: Volume 2: Acts-Colossians, describes the Galatian people as "emotional" and "impulsive" as well as

⁴² Meeks, *The Writings*, 11.

⁴³ Meeks, *The Writings*, 11.

⁴⁴ Meeks, *The Writings*, 12.

⁴⁵ Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 9.

“impetuous, fickle, arguing, loud, boastful, and immoral.”⁴⁶ This description is far from complimentary but defines the context into which Paul was writing.

The area was populated by Jews and by Greeks who saw religion through vastly different paradigm. The tribal identity and social standing of the Jews was often determined by exacting interpretations of Judaic law, while Greek identity was framed by norms of the Hellenistic world. As a result, assumptions, observations, and interpretations made by Paul are on display in the text. William Barclay in *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians: Revised Edition*, writes, “to read a letter is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation.”⁴⁷ We see Paul’s theological, pastoral, and emotional concerns. He is writing to a group of people embroiled in an emotional conflict, and he frames a relatively emotional letter—but we never hear the Galatian response to Paul’s words.

Dr. Luke Johnson explains that Christianity was in a period of rapid evolution at the time. The Galatians were recent converts from paganism, and probably had no knowledge of *Torah* before being introduced to it by the apostle.⁴⁸ He argues their identity was not in Christ, but rather in a culture from which they came.⁴⁹ In analyzing these points, it becomes clear that Paul experienced a desperation in sharing the importance of identity in Christ when he used phrases such as, “Who has bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1, NRSV). This concept is directly applicable to the doctoral research

⁴⁶ New International Version Preachers Outline and Sermon Bible, volume 2: Acts-Colossians (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Network, 2000), 951.

⁴⁷ Barclay, *The Letters*, xi.

⁴⁸ Luke Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: The Letter to the Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 328.

⁴⁹ Luke Johnson, 328.

project as it requires the early church to value culture while also sharing identity in Christ.

Dr. William Barclay suggests that it was not just a conversion from Paganism that was at issue. Jews of the period believed all God's promises and gifts were for them alone, and Gentiles could not receive these gifts. They rationalized that Christianity was for Jews only.⁵⁰ If a Gentile wished to become a Christian, Jews believed they needed to become Jewish first—accepting circumcision and the burden of the Law.⁵¹ Paul responds, however, as if this were an affront to Christianity which required justification by faith. Paul addresses this in Galatians 3:23-28. He speaks to culture, identity, and faith, calling the early church in Galatia to use its liberty to bring cultures together. To support this analysis, a word study beginning with the original language, Greek, is in order.

Word Study

As the original language of Paul's letter is Greek, this word study will begin with the pericope found in Barbara Aland's *The Greek New Testament*, Fifth Revised Edition as follows:

23 Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμου ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, 24 ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν 25 ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν. 26 Πάντες γὰρ νιὸι θεοῦ ἔστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ 27 ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε. 28 οὐκ ἔνι

⁵⁰ Barclay, *The Letters*, 4.

⁵¹ Barclay, *The Letters*, 5.

Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἐλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἔστε ἐν Χριστῷ⁵ Ἰησοῦ.⁵²

For this word study, four English translations of the Bible were utilized, two from a formal (or literal) equivalence method of translation and two from a dynamic equivalence method of translation. Dr. Jonathan Edward Kuwornu-Adjaottor writes about the differences between these categories from his African cultural background in an article entitled, “Dynamic Equivalence and Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible.” He says, “formal equivalence takes the words that are written in the ancient texts and translates them into a modern language and form and leaves the onus on the reader to interpret and apply the text.”⁵³ He puts the *King James Version (KJV)* and the *NRSV* in this category. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence translation takes into account how an author’s message might have been conditioned by their time, place, and culture.⁵⁴ He puts the translations of the *New International Version (NIV)* and *The New Living Translation (NLT)* into this second category.⁵⁵

Looking at verse 23 in the *KJV*, (a 17th-century literal equivalence translation, and the earliest English translation discussed here), Paul writes, “we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith” (Gal. 3:23, *KJV*). This can be compared to the *NRSV*, a mid to late 20th-century translation, which says “we were imprisoned” and “guarded” (Gal. 3:23, *NRSV*). In comparison to these dynamic equivalence translations, *The New International*

⁵² Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Fifth Revised Edition (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), Ga 3:23–28.

⁵³ Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Dynamic Equivalence and Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* (Ghana, Africa: Noyam Publishers, September, 2018), 244.

⁵⁴ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Dynamic Equivalence, 44-245.

⁵⁵ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Dynamic Equivalence, 44-245.

Version, a late 20th-century publication, uses “held in custody” and “locked up” (Gal. 3:23, *NIV*). *The New Living Translation*, an early 21st-century translation, uses the words “placed under guard” and “protective custody” (Gal. 3:23, *NLT*).

According to Kenneth Wuest in *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, this concept of being “kept” comes from the Greek word *phroureo* (φρουρέο), which means “to keep inward under lock and key.”⁵⁶ A word study of verse 23 supports the history previously discussed in this chapter in that Paul was speaking to Jewish people who were committed to keeping early church tradition and wanted to see Gentiles become Jews before they became Christians. This concept ties directly to the topic of doctoral work designed to create multicultural awareness. This mirrors a challenge in the modern church where all may be welcome, but the church has a tendency to encourage people to conform rather than model their own culture.

Ralph Earle, in *Word Meanings in the New Testament* described the Law as a jailer.⁵⁷ In other words, the early church was confined or kept in prison by Jewish Law. F. F. Bruce, in *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, offers a related interpretation. He said the phrase ὑπὸ νόμου ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόνετο refers to sin as jailor and the law as the warden or custodian.⁵⁸

Verse 23 also refers to “faith” (Gal. 3:23, *NRSV*). Herman Ridderbos, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of*

⁵⁶ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, volume 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 109.

⁵⁷ Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament: One Volume Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 278.

⁵⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle*, 181.

Galatia describes faith as the coming of Christ, a coming which had literally been discovered.⁵⁹ This discovery was one for all persons. It was a revelation that grace superseded Law and this was true for both Jews and Greeks.

The *KJV*'s verse 24 reference to a "schoolmaster" is unique. Barclay, in *The Letter to the Galatians and Ephesians*, takes the Greek word παιδαγωγὸς and transliterates it to *paidagogos* or "tutor."⁶⁰ According to *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Louw and Nida, the *paidagogos* was a slave who took a boy back and forth to school and supervised his conduct and morals.⁶¹ As a result, an early Galatian would have thought of a household servant, generally a very old servant with high character.⁶² Despite the role, Barclay states this person was not normally an actual teacher.⁶³ In this line of thinking, the *paidagogos* was much like the Law in that it was intended to guide until the teacher became involved. Paul is using a Greek word that would have resonated with the early church as he described them as following the *paidagogos* instead of the actual teacher. The language addresses their lack of growth. He accused the Galatian people of relying too heavily on the Law and neglecting the role of faith on their spiritual journey.

The word "schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24, *KJV*) may not connect with modern readers today. *The NRSV* uses the word "disciplinarian" (Gal. 3:24, *NRSV*) while the *NIV* uses the

⁵⁹ Ridderbos, *The New International Commentary*, 145.

⁶⁰ Barclay, *The Letter*, xi.

⁶¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1996), 465.

⁶² Barclay, *The Letters*, xi.

⁶³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 465.

word “guardian” (Gal. 3:24, *NIV*), as does *The New Living Translation* (Gal. 3:24, *NLT*).

Ultimately, Paul’s letter refers to this person as someone with a lack of flexibility. This ties directly to the thesis of this doctoral project. Attendees of the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies have, more than once, attempted to “correct” someone with a different cultural understanding. This was done with love, but it was misguided.

John Dow, in *The Abingdon Bible Commentary: Galatians*, quotes Gresham Machen this way: “A low view of law leads to legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace.”⁶⁴ If this is the case, then Paul is expressing an idea that the Galatian people are exhibiting a low view of law when instead they should be pursuing a high view based in grace. They should not just follow a set of rules—a *paiadagogos*, but rather seek grace.

Connecting verses 23 and 24 again to the history previously explained in this chapter, this terminology is consistent with something the Galatian people would have understood to be highly Roman. According to William Arndt in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, early Galatian people would have identified the Roman practice of holding prisoners until their arraignment with Paul’s concept of justification.⁶⁵ The Galatians would have associated Paul’s “justification by faith” with attaining freedom from a “disciplinarian” or “guardian.” Therefore, the references to being “imprisoned” or being “held” framed the thought process around a penal consequence without “faith.”

⁶⁴ Dow, *The Abingdon*, 1292.

⁶⁵ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 472.

Verse 25: This verse references “faith” as did verse 23 but in this verse “faith has come” (Gal. 3:25, *NRSV*). The English word “faith,” which appears in all four English translations compared here, comes from the root word, *πίστιν* and is transliterated as *pistis* in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*,⁶⁶ where it is defined as someone in whom confidence can be placed.⁶⁷ In this manner, “faith” is a liberator, a removal from custody, or a freeing from imprisonment. Connecting to the history discussed in this chapter, Paul was reminding the conflicted early church that faith in Jesus had freed them from the Law, bringing together the early Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Verse 26: This verse introduces the phrase, “you are all children of God” (Gal. 3:26, *NIV*). It is important to note that while all of the versions compared for this exegesis use the word “children,” in Paul’s time, the language used indicates a male child. This fact is noted in the *New Living Translation* which uses the word “children” but notates the male reference with an asterisk (Gal 3:26, *NLT*). This word, though, means more than just “children” or “sons” according to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. The Lexicon states the Greek word is *υἱός* transliterates to *huios* and refers to “a male who is in a kinship relationship either biologically or by legal action.”⁶⁸ Hence, Paul is defining the relationship between the Galatians and God as one of “kinship.” The church’s identity is defined by the people’s

⁶⁶ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English*, 818.

⁶⁷ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English*, 818.

⁶⁸ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English*, 1024.

connection to God. Paul does not define this novel Christian identity as a dismissal of their cultures, but rather as a new, collective identity as children of God.

Verse 27: The beginning of verse 27 refers to being “baptized in Christ” (Gal. 3:27, *NRSV*) again crafting a much-needed common identity in a divided church. Despite this reference, the latter part of verse 27 brings about differences in translation. *The NIV* and *The NRSV* both say, you “have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27, *NIV* and *NRSV*). The *KJV* says, you “have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27, *KJV*).

The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures uses the Greek word ἐνεδύσασθε here.⁶⁹ According to William Arndt in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, this transliterates to *enedysasthe* and means “the taking on of characteristics, virtues, and intentions.”⁷⁰ Paul is challenging the Galatian people, by nature of their baptism in Christ, to take on the qualities, characteristics, and intentions of Jesus Christ. This is clearly in response to the history studied previously about the church at Galatia and their lack of common identity despite the multicultural landscape. In addition, according to Ralph Earle, in *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, the Greek verb in use here is ἐνδύω which transliterates to *endyo*. The reference, again, is steeped in culture and history. For Gentiles, according to Earle, it referred to Roman youth who transitioned from boys to men in a ceremony filled with religious and ceremonial ritual in which a boy puts on the clothes of a man.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Brooke Wescott and Fenton Hort, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (New York, NY: Watch Tower Bible, 1969), 850.

⁷⁰ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English*, 333.

⁷¹ Earle, *Word Meaning*, 279.

Further consideration comes from William Barclay, in *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians: Revised Edition* who explains that, when male Jews to were baptized in Paul's time, they would cut their hair and nails, then undress.⁷² The baptismal contained a precise amount of water, and each part of the subject's body was washed, a confession of faith was made and, when the subject emerged, he had become a member of the Jewish faith.⁷³ The Jews and Gentiles would have heard this verse differently through the lens of their own unique cultural experiences and traditions.

In the verse concluding this pericope, verse 28, Paul names points to different cultural identities (Jew and Gentile), different socio-economic distinctions (slave and free), and different gender designations (men and women). Each of these pairings deserves close attention as each comes with a unique culture. Most translations use the term "slave" here, but the *KJV*, uses "bond" (Gal. 3:38, *KJV*). The word in Greek, according to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* is δοῦλος which transliterates as *doulos* and is "a male slave as an entity in a socioeconomic context."⁷⁴ In the year of the *KJV*'s publication (1611), when efforts to colonize America were beginning to expand forms of slavery and semi-slavery, another word would be "indentured servant."

Dr. Karin Neutel offers a radical reframing of these identity pairs. In her interview, *Interpreting Galatians 3:28*, she describes "cosmopolitanism" as a characteristic of antiquity around in Paul's time. This was a social conceptualization that

⁷² Barclay, *The Letters*, 32.

⁷³ Barclay, *The Letters*, 32.

⁷⁴ Arndt et al., *A Greek-English*, 260.

implied all persons were connected and could exist as a single society—rather than a divided society. Hence, Paul’s reference to Jew-Greek, male-female, and slave-free is inclusive, rather than particularizing.⁷⁵ In other words, Paul was speaking to an ideal society that embraced the unique backgrounds, socio-economic status, and the culture of persons in the early church. In regards to male-female, Dr. Neutel argues that it is not about the positions of men and women, as that was not a consideration in the first century.⁷⁶ Rather, a first century person would see this through the lens of procreation and marriage, and Paul held a vision of an ideal society where marriage, procreation, and death would be no more.⁷⁷ Neutel argues that it was not a statement about gender equality but rather a picture of a new relationship to life’s cycles and God’s world.⁷⁸ Paul is not asking the Galatians to discard culture, but to unify their many identities under the aegis of a revelatory paradigm, identity in Christ.

All four translations come to the same concluding point: “for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (*Galatians 3:28, NRSV*). Paul is not discounting the unique cultures in play in the early church. Rather, we read verse 28 in light of the baptismal relationship in verse 27. Timothy George expands on this in *Galatians* when he writes “the word *baptizō* literally meant ‘to dip’ or ‘immerse,’ and a closely related word *baptō* meaning ‘to dip or dye.’”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Karin Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians 3:28* (Oslo, Norway: Centre for Study of Human Origins, 2016). 4:33. www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfPOHY_df3Y&feature=youtu.be, 3:28.

⁷⁶ Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians*, 3:45.

⁷⁷ Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians*, 3:45.

⁷⁸ Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians*, 3:45.

⁷⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 283.

Ben Witherington, in his book entitled, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, writes, "It is, in any case, a mistake to evaluate Paul and his actions as if he were a modern Western person, with Western values about maintaining his independence."⁸⁰ In other words, Paul is writing to correct a division in the early church and is speaking about the lack of identity in Christ. Neutel says it is a post-modern misunderstanding of Galatians 3:28 to say that it devalues culture.⁸¹ She argues that first-century persons wouldn't have seen Paul's words through this lens and would have retained their culture while becoming unified in grace.⁸² Paul was not discounting the multicultural aspect of Jew-Gentile, slave-free, male-female. Rather, he was calling for a re-identification in relationship to their baptism.

A final, more modern piece of literary evidence regarding this key verse is found in *Tendencies in the Interpretation of Galatians Since 1990*, by Francois Tolmie, in which the author argues that the triple pair of descriptors represents the most essential cultural differences between people in Paul's time.⁸³ As a result, Paul's deliberate choice of these descriptors to the Galatian audience named, valued, and recognized the unique cultural aspects of the Galatian churches.⁸⁴ It was in creating new identity in Christ together that the division in the early church would subside.

⁸⁰ Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 72.

⁸¹ Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians*, 0:31

⁸² Neutel, *Interpreting Galatians*, 0:31

⁸³ DF Tolmie, *Tendencies In the Interpretation of Galatians 3:28 since 1990*. *Acta Theologica*. 33. 105. 10.4314/actat.v33i2S.6, 119.

⁸⁴ Tolmie, *Tendencies*, 107.

Summary of Biblical Learnings

The history of the region, the naming of the recipients of Paul's letter, the discussion of authorship, and the word-study on the pericope outlined in this chapter collectively highlight an issue in the early church and its resolution. Through connecting concepts of identity in Christ with multiculturalism, Paul's letter to the church at Galatia served as support for this project designed to increase multicultural awareness through adult education in a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho and offer a challenge to the church to give witness to Christ more fully in the multicultural context in which it sits.

As evidenced here, Paul did not say, "your culture does not matter." Instead, Paul suggests that very different groups of people could and should find collective identity within Christ even though they carried with them valuable, unique backgrounds and experiences. Galatians 3:23-29 certainly represents a text with multiple interpretations as evidenced by the varying departures of thought among the theologians and historians reviewed here; but, one thing is certain. Reading Paul's polemic letter through a modern paradigm can be risky, but interpreting it through a socio-cultural paradigm can produce revelatory understanding and help apply the wisdom of this pericope to the present day.

A closing word of wisdom came from Katalina Tahaafe-Williams who speaks directly to the multicultural impact of Galatians 3:28. She writes,

When Paul said in Galatians 3:28, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus," he was not preaching sameness and uniformity. He was affirming our unity in Christ amidst our God-gifted rich diversity! When we miss this point,

we forever clash as we try to remake others in our own image, waiting for the others to become like us before we can accept them.⁸⁵

These are refreshing words for 21st-century churches that often tries to remake others into a single political, cultural, and homogeneous image. The journey for the Galatian church, just as it can be for a 21st-century church, was one from Law to faith and from legalism to grace. In Paul's eyes, the uniqueness of Jew-Greek, slave-free, and male-female were not in any way erased in the body of Christ. Rather, the call was to shift to an identity based in faith and grace.

As consideration is given to the application of this biblical foundation for this doctoral project which placed a focus on creating multicultural awareness, the importance of intercultural awareness in our churches today is apparent. In the twenty-first-century, the descriptors of people are not normally Jew-Greek, slave-free, and male-female. The uniqueness of persons today is just as importantly named as it was in Paul's time. The Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies, where this research took place, is called to deeply value cultural diversity while seeking shared identity in Christ. It is in the incredible uniqueness of the body of Christ that the local church can strive for common identity in Christ. The church must never dismiss culture as a key and important factor but rather seek to value it as God does.

⁸⁵ Katalina Tahaffe-Williams, *Multicultural Ministry: A Call to Act Justly* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 72.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

In addition to the biblical foundation based in multicultural awareness and identity in Christ, this research project has a historical foundation. According to Yonat Shimron, the 6.6 million-member UMC is predominantly White and the denomination as a whole is experiencing declining attendance.¹ This dynamic is visually evident at the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies where the current attendees are 99% White. The Amity Campus, exists in a community that is 83.87% White² but was not developing an attending population that demographically matched the community around it.

Kevin Dougherty, Gerardo Marti, and Todd Ferguson published the study, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990-2010,” in the academic journal, *Social Forces* in 2021. The authors used Organizational Ecology Theory to assess growth and found that Methodist Churches with internal racial diversity were associated with higher-than-

¹ Yonat Shimron, “Study: Multiracial Methodist churches draw and keep more people than their White counterparts,” <https://religionnews.com/2021/04/16/study-multiracial-methodist-churches-draw-and-keep-more-people-than-their-White-counterparts/> (Columbia, MO: Religion News Service, 2021).

² “Full Insite Report,” <https://www.acstechnologies.com/missioninsite> (Irvine, CA: Mission Insite, 2019).

average attendance across the years.³ If the Amity Campus begins to address its lack of cultural diversity, this research indicates it will bolster attendance and keep it at levels that help the church remain viable. More important than self-sustainability, though, this work breaks down justice barriers and connects the church to its local community.

Dougherty, Martí, and Ferguson also determined that White churches in non-White neighborhoods fared worst in terms of growth.⁴ As the neighborhood surrounding the Amity Campus is less White than the state itself, the local church should improve its mission and ministry by seeking to better embrace the non-White community around it.

Lack of diversity in the United Methodist Church goes back several hundred years to one of its predecessor denominations, the Methodist Episcopal Church. This chapter examines the historical factors that led to cultural homogeneity in the church. Specifically, this chapter shares and analyzes the strong leadership of Bishop Russell Allen, founder of the Free African Society which gave way to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen's courageous, action-driven statement against racism and for justice in the church served as a historical foundation for this research. Through examination of racially-motivated incidents in the early Methodist Episcopal Church through the eyes of Bishop Allen, lessons can be gleaned that call the church to embrace the neighborhood in which it seeks to serve God.

³ Kevin Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, Todd W Ferguson, Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990–2010, *Social Forces*, Volume 100, Issue 1, September 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaa124>, 345–374.

⁴ Dougherty, Martí, & Ferguson, *Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities*.

This chapter approaches the life and ministry of Bishop Richard Allen and begins with his life as a slave, then continuing into his time as a free man. It utilizes key primary sources, including Allen's autobiography, re-published at the bicentennial of his death by his direct descendants. Source material also comes from the first Black-owned magazine, *Freedom's Journal*. This chapter describes the racist acts that prompted Allen and his associates to establish the Free African Society and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen's legacy will serve as a foundation for this doctoral project designed to increase multicultural awareness.

Early Years

Douglas Egerton wrote in *Judging the Founders: Richard Allen and the Soul of America*, "the fact remains that former slaves left behind too few documents and too many unanswerable questions."⁵ Research into Allen's early life is hobbled by this paucity of documents. Allen's garrulously-titled autobiography, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen: To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793 with an Address to the People of Color in the United States*, was a valuable source-text for this historical foundation research.

According to Nathan Feldmeth, in *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, Allen was born into slavery on February

⁵ Douglas Egerton, "Judging the Founders: Richard Allen and the Soul of America," in *Reviews in American History* 37 (New York, NY: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 23.

14, 1760 in Philadelphia, twenty-seven years before Pennsylvania would become the second state in the Union.⁶ This was the same year that Methodism began to take shape in America, according to *Roots (1736-1816)*, after Methodist founders John and Charles Wesley were unsuccessful in 1836 and 1738.⁷ The early Methodism experienced by a childhood-aged Allen was organized by lay Methodists as they immigrated to America. In the forward to Allen's, *The Life Experiences and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*, George Singleton explains Allen and his family were owned by the Quaker lawyer, Benjamin Chew, who served as Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.⁸

In *Richard Allen [Pennsylvania] (1760-1831)*, Priscilla Pope-Levison describes his three siblings, mother, and father as Black.⁹ While no documents could be located to corroborate the assertion, Daniel Payne, in *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, contradicts Pope-Levison and claims Allen was multiracial; his mother was White and his father was Black African.¹⁰ It is unfortunate more is not known more about his childhood and lineage—as well as the many others trapped in this horrible form of human trafficking.

⁶ Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History: Over 300 Terms Clearly and Concisely Defined, The IVP Pocket Reference Series* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 11.

⁷ *Who We Are*, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/roots> (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Church, 2022).

⁸ George Singleton in *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen: To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States America Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793 with an Address to the People of Color in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, reprinted 1969), 5.

⁹ Priscilla Pope-Levison, “Richard Allen [Pennsylvania] (1760-1831)” in *Black Past* <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/allen-richard-pennsylvania-1760-1831> (Seattle, WA: Black Past, October 18, 2007).

¹⁰ Daniel Payne, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1893), 85.

Pope-Levison states that, when he was eight, Allen, his father, mother, and three siblings were all sold to a new owner, Stokely Sturgis, near Dover, Delaware.¹¹ At this young age, Allen endured forced labor on the plantation field.¹² Allen's age was significant because at eight years old, in 1768, Methodism in America was taking a next step. *Roots* cites 1767 as the year Methodism began in Philadelphia, so it is likely Allen was aware of this new form of faith community.¹³ Despite this, Allen and his family would be moved away to Delaware.

A few years later, Sturgis' financial issues brought the family fresh traumas. The slaveholder sold Allen's mother and siblings, permanently separating the family. This moment must have been highly traumatic for a young Richard Allen. He says,

[Sturgis] was brought into difficulty, not being able to pay for us, and mother having several children after he had bought us, he sold my mother and three children... There were three children of us remained with our old master.”¹⁴

He seems to observe the breakup of his family almost casually. For the next several years, Allen would grow up with his brother on Sturgis' plantation during a time Methodism took yet another step. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, sent two lay preachers to America followed by Francis Asbury, a person who would become a critical figure in the development of Methodism.¹⁵

¹¹ Priscilla Pope-Levison.

¹² Priscilla Pope-Levison.

¹³ *Who We Are*.

¹⁴ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 17.

¹⁵ *Who We Are*.

As a teenaged Allen with his owner, Sturgis, he said, “during [this] time I was awakened and brought to see myself, poor, wretched, and undone, and without the mercy of God.”¹⁶ He continues,

Shortly after, I obtained mercy through the blood of Christ, and was constrained to exhort my old companions to seek the Lord. I went rejoicing for several days and was happy in the Lord, in conversing with many old, experienced Christians . . . I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day. One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of a sudden, my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled. I cried, enough for me—the Saviour died . . . I was constrained to go from house to house, exhorting my old companions, and telling too all around what a dear Saviour I had found.¹⁷

The conversion was a powerful experience. He describes desperately seeking mercy where none could be found before encountering a savior in the midst of a plantation—only a few years after watching his family be sold.

Methodism in America, in the thirteenth year of Allen’s life, held the first conference of Methodist preachers in Philadelphia.¹⁸ A regular pattern of conferences was started, similar to what Wesley put in place overseas in England.¹⁹ These childhood and teenage years of an early Methodist denomination paralleled the childhood and teenage years of Allen, as well.

¹⁶ Richard Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen: To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793 with an Address to the People of Color in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, reprinted 1969), 15.

¹⁷ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 15.

¹⁸ *Who We Are*.

¹⁹ *Who We Are*.

Allen's teen years were without perceived mercy but he did experience a call during this time of his life. While Allen does not, in his auto-biography share this, Priscilla Pope-Levison writes:

At age 17, Allen was converted to Methodism by an itinerant preacher. Allen's master, Stokely Sturgis, was said to have been influenced by Allen to become a Methodist as well.²⁰

Pope-Levison goes on to make the argument that Allen's call and the conversion of his master were more than a conversion to Methodism. Rather, they served as the beginning of Allen's call to ministry at a very early age as exemplified by the conversion of Stokely Sturgis.²¹ This is a moment of grace for Allen. He responded to his personal conversion by sharing grace with the very person who kept him in bondage.

Discussions with a research librarian at Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio, and other investigations offered inconclusive evidence regarding this conversion of Sturgis. In *Richard Allen*, Marcia Matthews explains that Sturgis was ill, and knew he was near death.²² Matthews claims that Sturgis "came to believe that religion made slaves better and not worse and often boasted about it to his friends."²³ Even if the slave-owners reasons for supporting religion were selfishly motivated, it does not limit the value of Allen's influence on his master, an influence that was profound.

²⁰ Pope-Levison, "Richard Allen."

²¹ Pope-Levison, "Richard Allen."

²² Marcia Matthews, *Richard Allen* (Baltimore, MD: Garamond Press, 1963), 2.

²³ Marcia Matthews, 2.

Allen's words seem to confirm his master's conclusions about religion's effect on those in bondage. He says that he would "attend more faithfully to our master's business."²⁴ Allen, however, contradicted the idea of Sturgis' conversion and described his interaction with Sturgis in this manner:

My master was an unconverted man, and all the family, but he was what the world called a good master. He was more like a father to his slaves than anything else. He was a very tender, humane man.²⁵

These words from Allen as a primary source directly contradict the statements made by Matthews. While there is no evidence to support Sturgis as fully converted, Allen's own words identify Sturgis' change of heart modeled through his treatment of others, especially the slaves he possessed at the time. Allen's call to ministry is evident in these first-person words. Even when held in slavery, he worked to share his faith and likely impacted the treatment of other slaves as a result. This is anti-racist justice-driven ministry.

During the time Allen served the Sturgis family he frequently attended prayer meetings. In fact, his master insisted that he attend, even when Allen was focusing on finishing his work.²⁶ From this perspective, God was indeed at work in the early years of Richard Allen's life.

²⁴ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 16.

²⁵ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 15.

²⁶ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 15.

Freedom

Allen's reflections about the need to gain freedom were mixed with fear.

Speaking about himself and his brother, he said:

I had it often impressed upon my mind that I should one day enjoy my freedom; for slavery is a bitter pill, notwithstanding we had a good master. But when we would think that our day's work was never done, we often thought that after our master's death we were liable to be sold to the highest bidder, as he was much in debt; and thus my troubles were increased, and I was often brought to weep between the porch and the altar.²⁷

A range of competing factors created a conflict for Allen: the warmth he had received from his master, and the obligation he felt toward him, the fear of an uncontrollable turn in his life, and the imperative to seek freedom in the face of this lack of control. Amidst of these competing concerns, Allen showed dignity, poise, and grace.

In his *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*, Nathan Feldmeth, suggests that Allen was already modeling gifts for ministry at a young age. He began to preach soon after his 1777 conversion. Near this time, he purchased his freedom from Sturgis.²⁸ Frederick Norwood, in *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and their Relations*, explains that Allen worked as a bricklayer, salt-wagon driver, and woodcutter to earn funds.²⁹

²⁷ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 18.

²⁸ Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*, 11.

²⁹ Frederick Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 170.

Allen shares that Sturgis “proposed to me and my brother buying our freedom, to pay him 60 pounds of gold and silver, or \$2,000 Continental money.”³⁰ Pope-Levinson confirms that, after five years of saving money from odd jobs, Allen and his brother paid \$2,000 each for their freedom.³¹

Allen, in his own writing, did not recall the year he finally collected the sum, but he did describe experiencing freedom for the first time. “We left our master’s house, and I may truly say it was like leaving our father’s house for he was a kind, affectionate and tender-hearted master, and told us to make his house our home when we were out of a place or sick.”³² Allen’s purchase of his freedom, a sign of oppression in itself, was a liberating moment for Allen.

Marcia Matthews, in *Richard Allen*, describes Allen’s departure from the plantation in this manner:

A middle-sized, muscular young Negro man walked down the dusty road away from the [Sturgis] plantation in Delaware. He did not look back at the big brick house that had been his home since boyhood, or at the elderly, White-haired man standing on the porch watching him go. It was not lack of sentiment that prompted this, for [Stokely] had been a kind and affectionate master. Of late years, he had treated Allen and his brother almost like sons...Richard Allen did not look back, because his was a stubborn nature and he was determined that this part of his life was over.³³

This departure from the plantation not only was a challenge to oppression but allowed Allen to engage a new life formed through ministry.

³⁰ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 17.

³¹ Pope-Levison, “Richard Allen.”

³² Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 18.

³³ Matthews, *Richard Allen*, 1.

Shortly after gaining his freedom, Allen began preaching in Methodist churches and at prayer meetings.³⁴ Feldmeth identifies Allen as one of the earliest circuit riders.³⁵ Allen simply stated, “I then traveled extensively, striving to preach the Gospel and my lot was cast in Wilmington.”³⁶

It was during these travels, initially by foot, that Allen got the opportunity to own a horse in true early circuit rider fashion. He said,

I expected I should have had to walk, as I had done before; but Mr. Davis had a creature that he made a present to me; but I intended to pay him for his horse if ever I got able. The horse was too light and small for me to travel on far. I traded it away with George Huftman for a blind horse but larger.³⁷

Allen used the ensuing years to live into his calling as a Christian leader by preaching and teaching in itinerancy but Methodism in American was also making great leaps forward as the Methodist Episcopal Church would formally take shape. It occurred at the 1784 General Conference (the “Christmas Conference”), the first such conference held in America where Allen met a number of preachers in Baltimore, including Richard Russell, and Bishop Asbury.³⁸ Allen’s time as a preacher was being formulated right along with the launch of this formal denomination in America. In fact, *Roots* argues that most of the American preachers attended this first General Conference and likely two African Americans, Harry Hosier and Richard Allen.³⁹

³⁴ Pope-Levison, “Richard Allen.”

³⁵ Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*, 11.

³⁶ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 19.

³⁷ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 21.

³⁸ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 22.

³⁹ *Who We Are*.

Methodist Episcopal Church Racism in Philadelphia

At this first conference of the newly minted Methodist Episcopal Church, the denomination tried to take a firm stand toward slavery. In *The Story of Methodism*, Halford Luccock and Paul Hutchison explain, “Written into the conclusion of the conference are words suggesting the need to immediately take ‘some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us.’”⁴⁰ Allen would likely have been drawn to this with deep passion. Despite this,

The Methodists found it impossible to maintain their absolute rejection of slavery as morally indefensible...From the clean-cut stance of 1784 they kept retreating by little and by little, until finally they reached the place where they left it largely to each Annual Conference as to what the attitude of Methodists in the region should be. [This continued and] by 1808 the church had reached the point where it had nothing today about slaveholding by its individual members, and only refused to admit slaveholders to official positions in cases where they failed to emancipate their slaves when the laws made that possible.⁴¹

These words convict Methodism from its inception, a religion that, from its origins in America, was embedded in the slave trade and oppression of non-White people. This story recalls later attempts by clergy in the Methodist Episcopal Church to take a Christlike stance against oppression, only to back away from that stand when public opinion or wealthy interests opposed it. Allen’s reaction to the stance of the Methodist Episcopal Church was likely one of deep disappointment.

⁴⁰ Halford Luccock and Paul Hutchison, *The Story of Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1926), 328.

⁴¹ Halford and Hutchison, *The Story of Methodism*. 328.

Returning to his home city of Philadelphia in 1786,⁴² Allen found no relief from racism. Marcia Matthews explains, “As long as the Negro was dependent on the benevolence of the white man he was tolerated as a useful member of society . . . but, even in colonial times, free Negroes had posed an economic threat to white immigrants in the north.”⁴³ In other words, independence for Allen, and other freed slaves still required a validation of their full equality. Matthews wrote, “Even the Methodists, so eager at first to accept the Negro as their brother, would feel [racism’s] evil breath.”⁴⁴

Racism was apparent in an interaction between Richard Allen and Bishop Asbury who had asked to meet Allen at Henry Gaff’s. Allen says,

[Asbury] told me he wished me to travel with him. He told me that in the slave countries, Carolina and other places, I must not intermix with the slaves, and I would frequently have to sleep in his carriage, and he would allow me my victuals and clothes. I told him I would not travel with him on these conditions . . . He smiled, and told me he would give me from then until he returned from the eastward to make up my mind, which would be about three months. But I made up my mind that I would not accept any of his proposals.⁴⁵

Despite his refusal to accept racism-related terms of his ministry, Richard Allen’s presence at the founding moments of the Methodist Episcopal Church is deeply significant. Yvonne Studevan, an educator and speaker, addressed a group regarding his contribution in a recording at the Athens National Library System on August 22, 2019. Studevan is Richard Allen’s great, great, great, great granddaughter. She spoke of her family’s heritage. She discussed the origin of the Methodist Episcopal Church as it

⁴² Pope-Levison, “Richard Allen.”

⁴³ Matthews, *Richard Allen*, 9.

⁴⁴ Matthews, *Richard Allen*, 9.

⁴⁵ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 22-23.

related to her forbear, saying, “Richard Allen, along with one other black pastor (Rev. Harry Hoosier), was present . . . when the Methodist denomination began in America.”⁴⁶

Mark Galli, in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, wrote that, by 1786, Blacks made up 10% of the Methodist [Episcopal] Church and often worshipped with Whites. Galli explained that segregated seating was the norm in the years leading up to 1786 with an area for Blacks called the “Negro Pew” or the “African Corner.”⁴⁷ This was the racism embedded in the early Methodist Episcopal Church from which Russel Allen and others would rebel in the future. When writing about the early church experience, Galli said, “blacks enjoyed no real freedom or equality.”⁴⁸ This is foundational to this project based on multicultural awareness as little understanding of this racist history in the church is taught in membership classes today.

John Wesley addressed this as well in a final letter prior to his death. On February 24, 1791, in a letter to William Wilberforce, Wesley addressed the topic of racism in the Methodist Episcopal Church when he said:

Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it . . . Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a

⁴⁶ Yvonne Studevan, “Richard Allen: Black Founding Father,” (Athens, GA: Athens-Clarke County Library, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjogBZWcDnA>

⁴⁷ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, “Introduction,” *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 188.

⁴⁸ Galli and Olsen, “Introduction,” 188.

"law" in our colonies that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this? ⁴⁹

Despite an embedded culture of racism in Wesley's fledgling Methodist Episcopal Church, Richard Allen continued to follow God's call and was assigned to preach in Philadelphia. He was given the 5:00am worship time at St. George's Church. When reflecting on this assignment, Allen writes, "I strove to preach as well as I could, but it was a great cross to me; but the Lord was with me... We had a good time, and several souls were awakened, and were earnestly seeking redemption." ⁵⁰

According to an article, *Richard Allen: Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, as a member of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen's leadership helped gather dozens of persons of color into the congregation resulting in about 10% of the congregation being Black. This increased racial tension for the White population in the church.⁵¹ In his autobiography, Allen also described increasing pressure from White church leaders as the population of Blacks in the church grew. Regardless of whether they were free or slave, all Blacks were forced to move away from White parishioners. ⁵²

Allen writes with about these developments with grace despite the fact it must have angered Allen. Even the clergy, at the time, were not supportive of Allen and his

⁴⁹ *Evangelical Advocacy: A Response to Global Poverty*, "Last Writing of John Wesley (a letter to William Wilberforce)" (2012). Papers, PDF Files, and Presentations. Book 10. <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/engaginggovernmentpapers/10>.

⁵⁰ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 24.

⁵¹ "Richard Allen: Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church" in *Christianity Today* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2021), 2.

⁵² Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 24.

Black colleagues in faith. Here, he describes the less-than-admirable behavior of other clergy,

I saw the necessity of erecting a place of worship for the colored people . . . [The Rev. Absalom Jones, William White, and Dorus Ginnings united with me as soon as it became public and known the elder who was stationed in the city. The Rev. C ____ B ____ opposed the plan, and would not submit to any argument we could raise; but he was shortly removed from the charge. The Rev. Mr. W ____ took the charge, and the Rev. L. ____ G ____ , Mr. W _____ was much opposed to an African church, and used very degrading and insulting language to us, to try and prevent us from going on. We all belonged to St. George's church . . . we felt ourselves much cramped; but my dear Lord was with us.⁵³

This writing style is indicative of Allen's amplification of grace. Even when referred to in a degrading manner and prevented from following his call, he refused to name the offending persons. This concept of letting the White people get away with racism is foundational to the doctoral project completed here. Increasing multicultural awareness requires White persons to recognize the racism embedded not only in society, but historically in the church.

This conduct was what set Richard Allen apart as a leader in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He chose a graceful response, initially, in the profoundly racist polity of that time. Allen had every right as a free man to rebel, but he chose to stand gracefully in the face of overwhelming oppression and racism within the early church.

Conversation with prospective students for this doctoral project indicated a lack of awareness of this deep history of racism and oppression in the early Methodist Episcopal Church, the predecessor to the United Methodist Church. Few knew that these racially-motivated incidents occurred in the church structure in a systemic fashion. This

⁵³ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 24.

limited comprehension leads to a paradigm of misunderstanding among the predominantly White congregation studied in this doctoral work.

It was in this culture of racism that Allen would engage in perhaps the most well-known moment of his leadership. Allen and other persons of color were confronted with abject racism at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. As Allen describes it,

When the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and place us around them all, and on Sabbath morning we went to church and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below, not knowing any better. We took those seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, the elder said, "Let us pray." We had not been long upon our knees before I heard a considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees, H_____ M_____, having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling me up off of his knees, and saying, "You must get up—you must now kneel here." Mr. Jones replied, "Wait until prayer is over." Mr. H_____ M____ said, "No, you must get up now, or I will call for aid and force you away." Mr. Jones said, "Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more." With that he beckoned to one of the other trustees, "Mr. L_____ S____ to come to his assistance. He came, and went to William White to pull him up. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church.⁵⁴

This systemic racism is evident throughout Allen's reported experiences and scar the mission of the church.

A deeper understanding remains missing from the historical, though. An example of this is in Jacob Albright's work, *The Early Progress of the Churches of United Methodism*. Albright understates the significance Allen's history-changing acts and gives evidence of church-based racism when he says, "Methodist work among the African

⁵⁴ Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors*, 22-23.

Americans, though generally successful, was also marred by schism.”⁵⁵ Albright identified Richard Allen as a “local preacher and a member of St. George’s Church [who] protested strongly against the segregation of African Americans to a separate part of the church during regular worship services.”⁵⁶ Albright, though self-admittedly writing a “compact history,” never addresses the magnitude of the racial antagonism. He does not write about the physical contact by the White trustees, the sudden move of all persons of color in the church, the increasing Black attendance, and the systematic pushback from the church leaders. As evidenced here, history recognizes the immense leadership of Bishop Allen but fails to fully name racism, oppressive violence, and White supremacy as the catalyst.

Free African Society

Despite his bold decision-making at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, Allen’s journey to establish a place of worship that modeled racial equality was challenging. In *Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education*, E. Curtis Alexander describes the beginning of the Free African Society. It was 1786 when Richard Allen proposed establishing a place of worship for what he termed, “the colored people.”⁵⁷ Only three persons, the Reverend Absalom Jones, William White, and Dorus Ginnings met for prayer but were soon barred from doing so by the Methodist Episcopal

⁵⁵ Jacob Albright, “The Early Progress of the Churches of United Methodism” in *United Methodism in America: A Compact History* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982), 58.

⁵⁶ Albright, 58.

⁵⁷ E. Curtis Alexander, *Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education* (New York, NY: ECA Associates, 1985), 20.

Church elder.⁵⁸ The White elder's action to prevent these free Black men from engaging in prayer was eerily similar to the way they were removed from the church and forced to the back. This action was the type of action that continued to press a normally graceful Allen to take larger steps to form a new society, specifically for the Black community to gather in freedom.

In *Richard Allen and Absalom Jones*, George Bragg records the initial birth of the Free African society. It occurred in Philadelphia on April 12, 1787.⁵⁹ The Free African Society was modeled after mutual aid societies and it served an important cultural role in Black communities.⁶⁰ The goal of the society was often morality-based but not necessarily religious and the society in Philadelphia was founded by Jones and Allen as a way for free persons of color to serve the community.⁶¹ Michael Barga, in the article, "Free African Society," states that many Whites hated and distrusted the Society, even as it impacted the community in positive ways.⁶²

Allen describes himself as the "overseer" of the new organization.⁶³ It's important to note that the Free African Society began during Allen's time at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. A connection should be made between the formation of a society of organized Blacks which stemmed from a culturally homogeneous White

⁵⁸ E. Curtis Alexander, 20.

⁵⁹ George Bragg, *Richard Allen and Absalom Jones* (Baltimore, MD: Church Advocate Press, 1915), 4.

⁶⁰ Michael Barga, *Free African Society*, <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/eras/colonial-postrev/free-african-society> (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022).

⁶¹ Michael Barga.

⁶² Michael Barga.

⁶³ Bragg, Allen and Jones (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1915), 4.

church and the response of the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church trustees. While the trustees interacted with Rev. Absalom Jones and Rev. Russell Allen, in reality they were engaging, in practicality, the entire African Society. To support this assertion, Rev. Teresa Brown, through the Research and Scholarship Department at the African Methodist Episcopal Church, wrote, “When officials at St. George’s MEC pulled blacks off their knees while praying, FAS members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans.”⁶⁴ For Brown, the response was led by Russell Allen, but was actually a response of the Free African Society.

The Free African Society was one of the first organizations of this type in America.⁶⁵ Allen’s participation in the Society, while important to its establishment, ended in June 1789—two years after its founding. Bragg writes that Allen, “was accordingly disunited until he shall come to a sense of his conduct, and request to be admitted a member according to our discipline.”⁶⁶ Free African Society’s focus on becoming one of the first “undenominational” churches in history.⁶⁷ This move may have been due, in part, to the leaning of the Free African Society towards a Quaker tradition. The Society was meeting in Allen’s home, but The Historical Society of Pennsylvania states the Free African Society eventually outgrew the ability to meet in Richard Allen’s house and moved to a Quaker African Schoolhouse—where it began to resemble a

⁶⁴ Teresa Brown, *History*, <https://www.amehistoryinthemaking.com/our-history/> (Nashville, TN: Department of Research and Scholarship of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2021).

⁶⁵ *The Free African Society*, <https://hsp.org/history-online/exhibits/richard-allen-apostle-of-freedom/the-free-african-society> (Philadelphia, PA: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 2020).

⁶⁶ Bragg, Allen and Jones (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1915), 4.

⁶⁷ Bragg, Allen and Jones (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1915), 4.

Quaker worship experience.⁶⁸ One of Allen's masters when he was a slave, Benjamin Chew, had been a Quaker. Perhaps this prompted Allen to push away from The Free African Society in the end as he was a committed Methodist Episcopal Church leader.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

According to Dennis Dickerson, retired general office of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), the AMEC grew out of the Free African Society.⁶⁹ This future was not certain, though, as the members of the Society had discussed the possibility of becoming part of the Protestant Episcopal Church. According to Dickerson, many wanted to remain Methodists.⁷⁰ This idea is argued in the writing of Dr. E. Curtis Alexander, in *Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education*, when he quotes the Right Reverend John Douglas Bright, Sr., who became the president of the Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bright said:

Identity was the crucial issue running through discussions in the Free African Society. The society considered affiliation with the Episcopal, Methodist, or Quaker groups. Allen favored membership with a church which was more hostile to black identity and black expression. For him this was possible with the Methodist church even though this meant continued confrontation and court suits and finally recognition of an independent church.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *The Free African Society*, <https://hsp.org/history-online/exhibits/richard-allen-apostle-of-freedom/the-free-african-society> (Philadelphia, PA: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 2020).

⁶⁹ Dennis Dickerson, *Our History*, <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/> (Nashville, TN: AME Church, 2020).

⁷⁰ Dennis Dickerson.

⁷¹ E. Curtis Alexander, *Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education* (New York: ECA Associates, 1985), 8.

The experience of Methodist spiritual practices was at Allen's core, so, though he sought to serve in a place free of racism's evils, he was reluctant to sunder his relationship with his original faith tradition. The Methodist Episcopal Church, though, was complicit in racism from the earliest days, so there was significant tension regarding where the Society should affiliate.

Theresa Brown suggests the vote to remain a new form of Methodism or affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church was not split evenly. She says, "Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen eventually led a small group who resolved to remain Methodists."⁷² As a result, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1794 with Allen as the founding pastor and was referred to as "Mother Bethel."⁷³ Richard Allen and Absalom Jones went on to become part-founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.⁷⁴ Allen and Jones were drawn to beginning the church because they sought a way for Blacks to unite in serving the community, hence the making of the Free African Society, but, eventually, they sought to escape Quaker influence. Lastly, the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church allowed a fully religious, rather than merely morality-based, focus on their work. It was a way of creating a place where Blacks could worship in safety in a very Methodist way—something that was a core need for Allen since his youth.

Bishop Asbury (who had suggested Allen sleep in his carriage) recognized the importance of a building dedicated church for the use of this fledgling organization. In

⁷² Brown, *History*.

⁷³ Dickerson, *Our History*.

⁷⁴ Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*, 11.

1794, he dedicated a building for such a purpose.⁷⁵ Allen was consecrated as the denomination's bishop five years later.⁷⁶

In her 2019 lecture, "Richard Allen: Black Founding Father," Yvonne Studevan, says, "[The organization] was founded by people of African descent, with Methodist doctrine, and an Episcopal organizational structure."⁷⁷ Each of these features is reflective of a formational social affiliation that had shaped Allen.

Allen pursued his desire to influence the community and remain Methodist. In Bragg's account, C. T. Walker describes the African Methodist Episcopal Church as being "far and away ahead of any other denomination of Negro Christians [with the] largest number of Bishops and other general officers...an excellent printing plant...the largest number of communicants."⁷⁸

The co-existence of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church would continue for many decades, even after Allen's death in 1831. In 1856, the *Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* said, "There [was] only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.'"⁷⁹ One of the criteria for membership, though, became a prohibition against, "The buying and selling of men,

⁷⁵ Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism*, 170.

⁷⁶ Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*, 11.

⁷⁷ Studevan, "Richard Allen: Black Founding Father,"

⁷⁸ Bragg, *Richard Allen and Absalom Jones*, 16.

⁷⁹ *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati, OH: Swormstedt and Poe, 1856), 27.

women, and children, with an intention to enslave them.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, it would not be until 1864 when a new section was added to the *Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* which said:

Slavery

Question: What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery.

Answer: We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of Slavery. We believe that the buying, selling, or holding of human beings, to be used as chattels, is contrary to the laws of God and nature, and inconsistent with the Golden Rule and with that Rule in our Discipline which requires all who desire to continue among us to “do no harm,” and to “avoid evil of every kind.” We therefore affectionately admonish all our Preachers and people to keep themselves pure from this great evil, and to seek its extirpation by all lawful and Christian means.⁸¹

Allen’s challenge to oppression was a catalyst for this change in the culturally homogeneous White churches of the time.

It was December 6, 1865 when slavery would be abolished in America.⁸² Despite this, the Methodist Episcopal Church would continue to struggle with issues related to racism. Multiple divisions of the denomination would take place over the years to come, primarily regarding the issue of racism. Peter Murray, in “The Racial Crisis in the Methodist Church,” described this history when he stated that by 1939, northern and southern Methodist churches reunited and the church created what Murray called, “the most rigid racial structures among all American churches.”⁸³ From its earliest inception,

⁸⁰ *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1856)*, 27.

⁸¹ *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati, OH: Swormstedt & Poe, 1864), 33-34.

⁸² National Archives, “America’s Historical Documents,” *The United States Constitution*, <https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/13th-amendment> (Washington DC: The National Archives, September 8, 2016).

⁸³ Murray, Peter, “The Racial Crisis in the Methodist Church,” *Methodist History*, (Nashville, TN: The General Commission on Archives and History, October 1, 1987), 3.

multiple forms of American Methodist had been tarnished by racism and, by 1939, had only 5% of members who were Black while the African Methodist Episcopal Church started by Allen continued as a strong organization.⁸⁴

When *Brown vs. Board of Education* ended segregation, the 1954 Council of Bishops endorsed the decision, according to Murray. Despite this, the Southeastern Jurisdiction's bishops urged their colleagues to be silent and refuse to participate in the statement of the Council of Bishops.⁸⁵ Even after significant denominational change, constitutional change, and case law, varying forms of Methodism continued to struggle with racism.

The history leads to 1968, when the United Methodist Church was formed as a merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Regarding this, Murray said, "A racially inclusive church would have to open itself to the talents of black Methodists and actively remove all vestiges of racism."⁸⁶ Despite these efforts to create an inclusive church, parishioners included in this doctoral project all claimed to know little about the racist history of the denomination and its predecessors and none could identify the role of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. A lack of awareness of the origins of this separation leads to lack of multicultural awareness, the topic of this doctoral project. The African Methodist Episcopal Church represents more than a denomination; it represents a safehouse for cultural expression. Allen's leadership,

⁸⁴ Murray, 4.

⁸⁵ Murray, 4.

⁸⁶ Murray, 8.

foresight, and willingness to use grace and humility to stand up to injustice formed an institution that continues his legacy today.

Allen's Legacy

There is only one image of Allen, and it was painted in 1813. It is still held by St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia and appears on many books that bear Allen's name.⁸⁷ He appears as a man of short stature, wearing respectable time-period based formal attire. Newman provides an echo to the character revealed by the portrait when he writes, "Allen was a man for whom propriety and dignity remained key parts of his identity."⁸⁸ Despite his small stature, Allen's insistence on justice and his legacy are large.

Freedom's Journal described Allen as, "The first person that formed a Religious Society among the People of Colour [sic] in the United States of America."⁸⁹ It goes on to describe his legacy as that of "the first person that established a Benevolent Society among us for the grand purpose of relieving one another in times of distress."⁹⁰ This pastoral step in Allen's leadership was a unifying moment among people who had survived similar challenges, though those challenges were not recognized by the predominantly White church at the time.

⁸⁷ Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 8.

⁸⁸ Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 7.

⁸⁹ "Bishop Allen" in *Freedom's Journal. Volume I-No. XLVIII (February 22, 1828)*, 3.

⁹⁰ *Freedom's Journal*, Bishop Allen, 3.

Freedom's Journal further describes Allen as “the founder of the first African Church in the United States of America, whereby [persons of color] were enabled to worship Almighty God under our own vine and fig-tree, with none to harm, nor yet make us afraid.”⁹¹ It describes Allen in this manner: “though aged, yet zealous in the cause of his depressed and injured race; though weak and infirm in body, yet strong in the grace of God.”⁹² Allen’s legacy of listening to God’s call and following it shaped the lives and spiritual journey of all those that ventured out of St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church and into a new denomination. Moreso, it charted a course that would challenge racism in predominantly White churches. Allen and his colleagues possessed and modeled the courage required to confront White supremacy and racism embedded in predominantly White churches. As such, he is described as “the Father of organized black religion”⁹³ by Mwalimu Mwadilfu, writing in *Richard Allen, The First Exemplar of African American Education.*” This sentiment regarding Allen’s legacy was echoed by Allen’s direct descendant, Yvonne Studevan, when she said, “Richard Allen was the founder and first bishop of the oldest black-established organization in the western world.”⁹⁴ In addition to those he impacted directly, Allen’s courageous actions inspired others by example—such as the Blacks who walked out of John Street Church in New York.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Freedom's Journal*, Bishop Allen, 3.

⁹² *Freedom's Journal*, Bishop Allen, 3.

⁹³ Mwalimu Mwadilfu, *Richard Allen: The First Exemplar of African American Education* (New York, NY: ECA Associates, 1985) 17.

⁹⁴ Studevan, “Richard Allen: Black Founding Father.”

⁹⁵ “Timeline: Methodism in Black and White,” in *New World Outlook* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Communications, May-June, 1992).

The church Allen and his colleagues walked out of was also impacted by his legacy. His departure and creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church would leave the predominantly White and newly-formed Methodist Episcopal Church without persons of color. The Methodist Episcopal Church was forced to wrestle with its own White supremacy in the years to come. A review of multiple quadrennia of the *Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* showed it took years, but the church eventually took a stand against racism in its Discipline. Not only did Allen's work start the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it also forced the Methodist Episcopal Church to address an evil to be found within its walls.

David Walker writes of the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal church, "I do hereby openly affirm it to the world, that [Richard Allen] has done more in a spiritual sense for [Blacks] than any other man of colour has, since the world began."⁹⁶ He went on to describe Allen's legacy as fusing theory and practice by using the secular and religious.⁹⁷ This description challenges today's predominantly White churches to confront White supremacy, grow in multicultural awareness, and fuse theory with practice.

Allen was described as "self-sacrificing" and "indifferent to his own personal welfare, interest, comfort, and advantages"⁹⁸ by John Palmer, in a sermon on February 20, 1998, entitled, *Was Richard Allen Great*. This is not just a legacy of social justice, but

⁹⁶ David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal, In Four Articles: Together With A Preamble To The Coloured Citizens Of The World, But In Particular, And Very Expressly, To Those Of The United States Of America*, revised edition with an Introduction by Sean Wilentz (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1995), 19.

⁹⁷ Walker, *David Walker's Appeal*, 19.

⁹⁸ John Palmer, *Was Richard Allen Great* (Philadelphia, PA: Weekly Astonisher Print, 1998).

a legacy of placing others first in a Christ-like manner. In perhaps his most important legacy, though, Bishop Richard Allen's leadership calls each of us to more effectively challenge oppressive cultures within the church. Allen was strong and challenged the socio-political structure of the time. He survived to make change occur and the church today is called to make change occur as well, ensuring that racism has no place in the body of Christ.

Key Historical Insights for this Project

Idaho, as previously shown in this manuscript, is a state without significant racial diversity but the Amity Campus of the Cathedral exists in an area of greater multiculturalism. Racial divides between churches and their community still exist over 200 years after Allen formed a new denomination. In all that time, there has been a struggle with issues related to racism and oppression in the church. As a result, this doctoral project named the history directly for those that were unaware, it called out White supremacy in churches, and worked to develop increasing multicultural awareness. Predominantly White churches today may believe issues of racism are societal and not found in the church, but a study of Allen's experience and a study of history indicates just how false this is. Racism has been a part of Methodism since the day of its inception in America. Through the voices of people of color, the global majority, this project is intended to cross a racial divide, to speak truth to history in our churches, to challenge racism in our church cultures, and create awareness among study participants.

The first key insights from this historical study is a newfound awareness of the patience with which Allen endured oppression. When he had every moral right to respond

forcefully, he modeled Christlike qualities while strongly objecting. When he had the opportunity to name those who hurt him, he refused to share those names. His Christlike character is undeniable.

Another insight is that Allen attempted to change the church from within, but eventually had to exit and create something new to take a step toward equality. This did not occur because Allen chose it. It occurred because the church was overtly racist but also exhibited a lack of multicultural awareness. The church failed to gain any self-awareness, leaving Allen with few alternatives. Seeking a different path, this doctoral project addresses awareness from the inside. Through the use of speakers of color, detailed discussion of church history (including Allen's experiences), studying racism, oppression, and the complicity of our faith tradition, students in the study gained a knowledge of church and its complicit conduct.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

In addition to explaining its biblical and historical foundations, this chapter articulates the theological theme undergirding this doctoral project. Specifically, this chapter examines liberation theology, giving particular emphasis to black liberation theology. This thematic foundation lends credence a project designed to increase multicultural competence through adult education in a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho and offers a challenge to the church to more accurately reflect the community in which it is located.

While United Methodism is facing a general decline in attendance, a hopeful study was released in April 2021 by Religion News Service that examined Methodist Church attendance in light of race. Author, Yonat Shimron, states in “Multiracial Methodist Churches Draw and Keep More People than their White Counterparts,” that the UMC’s predominantly White churches experience greater declines in attendance.¹ This is concerning as the subject church of this project meets the descriptors: “predominantly White and experiencing significant decline.”²

¹ Yonat Shimron, “Study: Multiracial Methodist churches draw and keep more people than their White counterparts,” (Columbia, MO: Religion News Service), <https://religionnews.com/2021/04/16/study-multiracial-methodist-churches-draw-and-keep-more-people-than-their-White-counterparts/>.

² Shimron, “Study: Multiracial Methodist.”

Though it has had short-term increases, the culturally homogenous Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies has faced more than a decade of attendance decline. There may be multi-faceted causes for this, but the project scope will be limited to one area: multicultural awareness. The Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies is in a position where nearly 100% of the congregation is White while the neighborhood around it is more diverse. Therefore, the Shimron study provides both a theological discussion for the local church while also providing insight for a new more diverse future with hope.

In addition to the statistics around multiculturalism and church growth, the theological problem goes deeper. Through research into the divide of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it became apparent that racism has been a factor in the Methodist denomination since its inception. From the moment Russell Allen exited a Methodist Episcopal Church after decades of argument over slavery and racism, the Methodist Episcopal Church and subsequent United Methodist Church have struggled to become multicultural.

An example of this is evident in the Pew Research Center's Study entitled, "Faith Among Black Americans" with analysis by Besheer Mohamed, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz. This study identified that 60% of black adults attend a black church while only 13% attend a White church. 25% attend a multiracial church and 1% did not answer.³ This evidence prompts further concern if one is to accept the Shimron study showing a connection between local church growth and diverse ministry settings.

³ Besheer Mohamed, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz, "Faith Among Black Americans" in *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans> (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, February 16, 2021).

The focus of this chapter is to examine and develop a deeper understanding of liberation theology with a focus on black liberation theology as the subject offers insight into a church that can be redemptive, diverse, and growing both spiritually and physical. As a predominantly White church in a more diverse neighborhood, a deeper understanding of this theological foundation can offer a hopeful future for both the attendees and the community.

As an overview of the work ahead, this chapter will begin, first, with the origins of liberation theology. From there, it will move to themes within liberation theology that developed over the years to follow. Black liberation theology, specifically, will receive attention as the guest teachers involved in the doctoral project will address this specialty within liberation theology in greater detail. In a field as historically recent as liberation theology, the year-range from more classic theologians to modern theologians is narrow. Both early theologians and more recent theologians will be examined. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a connection between black liberation theology and the doctoral project related to race and the church.

The Origins of Liberation theology

To properly address the concept of liberation theology, the proper starting point is with the origin of this theological movement. In a lecture entitled, “Modern and Current Theological Schools,” Dr. Andrew Sung Park described three theoretical disciplines as biblical, historical, and systematic with liberation theology as a form of systematic

theology.⁴ This is applicable to the local church as a project designed to provide experiential adult education is also designed to formulate a system for new beliefs and actions with regards to race in the local church.

This form of theology, according to Alister McGrath in *Christian Theology: An Introduction (version 6th edition)* “is used to refer to a family of theologies which arise within socially or politically marginalized communities, providing the basis for religious and social empowerment.”⁵ In other words, this theology would be unlikely to develop naturally within a predominantly White congregation that lacks “social or politically marginalized communities.”⁶ If this is the case, if the local church is to become more multicultural, the local church has work to do in regards to seeing faith through the eyes of marginalized persons.

Miguel De La Torre takes this understanding a step further in the *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation*, when he says:

Any discussion of God-if it is to be liberating for humanity, must include the question of evil, addressing forthrightly the suffering and injustice that pervade human life. Evil involves the conscious and unconscious exercise of individual and/or systemic agency toward injurious consequences for others.⁷

As a result, it is not just the intentional or “conscious” actions of persons that can be evil. The “unconscious” or non-intentional actions can be evil as well. In a homogeneous, predominantly White congregation, multiple unconscious exercises of injury can occur.

⁴ Andrew Sung Park, “Modern and Current Theological Schools.” Lecture (Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary, January, 2018).

⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction (version 6th edition.)* (Newark, NJ: Wiley, 2017), 74.

⁶ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 74

⁷ Miguel De La Torre, ed. *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 10.

This local church models itself to be united in its desire to end conscious practices of racism. The local church, however, struggles with seeing, identifying, and ending the unconscious practices.

Alister McGrath, however, offers a reminder that liberation theology is cognizant of the fact that churches have often chosen the side of oppression, especially through the church's support of governments that oppress people.⁸ McGrath cites the foundational work in liberation theology by Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest, author and theologian; as well as and Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian author and theologian as being at the forefront of Liberation Theological origins.⁹ This analysis of liberation theology begins with its origin with these founding theologians.

McGrath says, "liberation theology is oriented toward the poor and oppressed."¹⁰ In a predominantly middle to upper income White church in a predominantly White state, however, this concept of orientation toward the poor and oppressed can often become mission-minded rather than liberation theology driven. In other words, parishioners often request a mission "project" to do or to fund, but can resist engaging the social and political dialogues required to prevent the need for the mission project in the first place.

This theological breakdown is perhaps one such cause of the homogeneity of the church being studied. Without a shift in theological understanding of the role of the church to more closely match founders like Gustavo Gutiérrez and without a focus on the Gospel message being liberating in nature, a multicultural expression of church may be

⁸ McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 74

⁹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 74

¹⁰ McGrath, *Christian Theology*.74

challenging to achieve. As a result, the doctoral project workd to increase this multicultural awareness.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, as a founder of liberation theology, could be considered a classic theologian in this regard. He speaks to a classic understanding of theology in *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, when he says identifies two primary functions of theology: “theology as wisdom and theology as rational knowledge.”¹¹ He further discusses a division which he attributes to the 14th century between theological thinking and spiritual thinking and cautions these must not be separated.¹² In other words, Gutiérrez is arguing that a growing spirituality cannot be separated from a growing theology in churches, so a project designed to create multicultural awareness must be focused on spirituality and theology, together. Gutiérrez adds to this when he says, “All the factors we have considered have been responsible for a more accurate understanding that communion with the Lord inescapably means a Christian life centered around a concrete and creative commitment of service to others.”¹³ He emphasizes the point further when he says:

Theology must be critical reflection on humankind, on basic human principles. Only with this approach will theology be a serious discourse, aware of itself, in full possession of its conceptual elements. But we are not referring exclusively to this epistemological aspect when we talk about theology as critical reflection. We also refer to a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. To disregard these is to deceive both oneself and others.

¹¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 4.

¹² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*. 4.

¹³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*. 9.

Analyzing Gutiérrez, one would recognize that, at the time of his writing, he serving as a Roman Catholic priest in a poor country. His work was designed to connect the theological, spiritual, and socio-economic and socio-cultural genres together. This is the beginning of liberation theology, and an area often times rejected by the predominantly White church citing it as “too political.”

Another classic theologian at the forefront of the origin of liberation theology is Leonardo Boff. In *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, Boff introduces the concept of liberation theology when he says:

In the Jewish religion at the time of Jesus, everything was prescribed and determined, first relations with God and then Relations among Human beings. Conscience felt itself oppressed by insupportable legal prescriptions. Jesus raises an impressive protest against all such human enslavement in the name of the law.¹⁴

Boff is directing the thinking process to one that is communal rather than individual. He is also speaking truth to power in calling out government supported human enslavement.

He re-emphasizes this concept of communal faith, justice-seeking, and liberation when he says:

The theme of Christ’s preaching was never himself nor the church but the kingdom of God. “Kingdom of God” signifies the realization of a utopia cherished in human hearts, total human and cosmic liberation. It is the new situation of an old world, now replete with God and reconciled with itself. In a word, it could be said that the kingdom of God means a total, global, structural revolution of the old order, brought about by God and only by God. Consequently, the kingdom is a kingdom of God in a subjective and objective sense.¹⁵

¹⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*. Translated by Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), 63.

¹⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*. 63-64.

While Boff is 10 years younger than Gutiérrez, there is a similarity of thinking around the role of theology, spirituality, and missional purpose. Both theologians are challenging the church to be a representation of the journey of the people experiencing oppression. This is highly foundational to the local church in Idaho which sought to be more representative of the community through multicultural awareness.

While Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff, coming from different ethnic backgrounds, are identified as the founders of liberation theology, there are other influences around the origin of this theological construct as well. In *Liberation Theology*, C. Emilio Antonio Núñez describes the position of liberation theologians saying:

Liberation theologians say that theological reflection should be a product of the social situation and praxis, rooted in the struggle to free those who are oppressed under unjust economic structures. These theologians move from society to theology and give preeminence to the social context, so in order to understand liberation theology it is essential at least to give an overview of Latin American social reality, emphasizing the way in which theological liberationism analyzes that reality.¹⁶

Núñez, too places the origin of liberation theology within the Latin American context. This approach to theology, she says, “represents an effort to radically change the traditional concept of what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ, or to be Christians, in a society marked by conflict.”¹⁷ Specifically in the Idaho context, a paradigm of seeing Christ through liberation theology is indeed a substantial shift from tradition. Seeking this new insight in the local church is critical to become closer to what Boff referred to as the “Kingdom of God”¹⁸ in the local church.

¹⁶ C. Emilio Antonio Núñez, *Liberation Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985), 17.

¹⁷ Núñez, *Liberation Theology*. 35.

¹⁸ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*. 64.

As a result of this learning, this doctoral project was filled with guest teachers of color and will honor and respect the Latino/a speakers in an effort to recognize the unique context in which this theology originates. While liberation theology has its origins in Latin America, there are other themes within liberation theology that are foundational to this local Idaho church and community, as well.

Themes of Liberation theology

The work of liberation theology that originated with theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff has taken root throughout the world through other themes. In *The Latino Christ in Art, Literature, and liberation theology*, Michael Candelaria looks at the influences of liberation theology as expressed in art, literature, and theology. Candelaria, when speaking of the role of liberation theology in these art forms, says:

Given the antagonistic nature of social conflict, Christ cannot be neutral but must take sides. Christ is a partisan of the oppressed, and the Christian, to be true to Christ, must be a partisan in the struggle between classes, striving for the liberation of the oppressed.¹⁹

In this paradigm of social conflict and a Christ that is “partisan,”²⁰ as Candelaria puts it, biblical interpretation becomes a theme of liberation theology. Using Luke 18:11-14, the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector who went to the temple, Candelaria discusses the varying interpretations. In this story, Candelaria offers a reminder that a Jewish Palestinian audience would have been shocked when Jesus approved of the tax collector

¹⁹ Michael R. Candelaria, *The Latino Christ in Art, Literature, and Liberation Theology (version First edition.)*. <https://muse-jhu-edu.dtl.idm.oclc.org/book/57850> (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 176.

²⁰ Candelaria, *The Latino Christ*. 176.

and chastises the Pharisee.²¹ Candelaria suggests this view, while not particularly surprising 2,000 years later, would have been an utterly shocking Liberationist view for the audience at the time.²² In other words, when scripture is read from a liberation theology paradigm, biblical interpretation may change. This is foundational to this doctoral work in a local Idaho church seeking to increase its multicultural awareness. Not only does a liberationist perspective call the local church to take on new practices, it also calls the church to see the biblical story through a new lens.

Another theme of liberation theology is termed a “womanist perspective.”²³ This view was represented in guest teachers in the doctoral project, so it is equally important to study. In *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion*, by Dwight N. Hopkins, Hopkins refers to this theme of liberation theology as “another indigenous form of liberation theology [which] has developed to distance black women’s positive faith, thoughts, and realities from the racism of White Christian feminists and from the sexism of black male theologians.”²⁴ It is particularly relevant to this local church and project as Hopkins calls into question the “servanthood” language used in local church experiences describing “the exploitative nature of that service [that] in effect, has meant that African American women have lacked concrete, structural political, economic, and social mechanisms for their empowerment.”²⁵ This theme of liberation theology offers what Hopkins terms, the

²¹ Candelaria, *The Latino Christ*, 180.

²² Candelaria, *The Latino Christ*, 180.

²³ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 39.

²⁴ Hopkins, *Being Human*. 39.

²⁵ Hopkins, *Being Human*.40.

“social witness of African American women’s lives, particularly their moral, justice-oriented wisdom.”²⁶ Including a womanist perspective in a project related to multicultural awareness is, then, important and foundational.

Another flavor of liberation theology is identified by M. Shawn Copeland. Her text, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* addresses our theological ideas of being human.²⁷ Her description of Jesus, through the lens of liberation theology, is powerful and calls for a deeper understanding of biblical stories. She says:

Jesus of Nazareth was born and died subjugated to the Roman Empire. His flesh, his body, was and remains marked by race, gender, culture, and religion: he was a practicing Jew in a territory controlled by Roman political, military, and economic forces. Jesus was and remains marked by sex, gender, and sexuality: he was male, and, although we cannot speak about his sexual orientation, tradition assumes his heterosexuality. In his flesh, in his body, Jesus knew refugee status, occupation, and colonization, social regulation, and control.”²⁸

This body-centric theme of liberation theology calls to mind the fact that we, either in historical times or still today, cannot avoid the body in which we find ourselves. The concept of liberation theology is, then, through the lens of the body. This was foundational to this doctoral project as it involved guest teachers of color addressing a predominantly White local church. To emphasize Copeland’s words, the teachers in the project “remain marked by sex, gender, and sexuality”²⁹ in the eyes of an all-White church. As a result, creating a safe environment where open, honest, and graceful

²⁶ Hopkins, *Being Human*, 42.

²⁷ Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Human Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 58.

²⁸ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 58.

²⁹ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 58.

dialogue can take place was critical. Calling truth to power was, then, is the first step in such a project.

Another theme of liberation theology that must appear in the upcoming project is the framework of organized worship. Worship style is one of the great dividers of churches and even within larger churches. The White church tends to refer to something as “traditional” worship which in fact is Euro-centric in nature. This concept was reflected the project educational sessions in an effort to re-define the word, “tradition” from a multicultural lens. In *African American Christian Worship. Rev. ed*, Melva Wilson Costen discusses the Methodist traditions of worship and how they are impacted by our theological lens. Costen says, “The uninhibited enthusiasm in the worship of early Methodists appealed to people of African descent in America.”³⁰ She mention a previously studied historical figure in this manuscript, Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Costen credits Allen with modifying the Methodist form of worship to accommodate the culture and aesthetics of the new African American congregation.³¹ From this perspective, then, the challenge with multicultural awareness may not be limited just to a Euro-centric theology or a liberation theology mindset. It may appear in a variety of themes, such as the method of worship. Developing multicultural awareness leading to multicultural expression in church would require modification of worship style as well.

These expressions or themes of liberation theology and their manifestation in the local church are not exhaustive. Each of these areas examined appeared in the guest

³⁰ Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship. Rev. edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 96.

³¹ Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 96.

teachers in this project in order to experience the breadth and depth of liberation theology in a predominantly White church. Liberation theology, as evidenced here, is clearly a way of thinking, a way of biblical interpretation, a way of worship, and most importantly, a way of action. Striving for multiculturalism in a predominantly White church in Idaho required extensive theological study across these areas to grasp a new worldview for today's Christians.

Black Liberation Theology

While the liberation theology movement began initially as a Latino/a theological paradigm and developed through multiple other perspectives, the emergence of black liberation theology is a critical focus of this research project. Alister McGrath describes liberation theology by saying, “many see ‘black theology’ most famously expressed in the writings of James H. Cone (born 1938), particularly his *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) – as an excellent example of this kind of movement.”³²

Turning to the primary source, Dr. James Cone, as the founder of black liberation theology addresses this concept in several books, speaking to the context of American Christianity. He says, “The appearance of Jesus as the black Christ also means that the black revolution is God’s kingdom becoming a reality in America.”³³ This black liberation theology understanding that God is black originates with Dr. Cone but is emphasized by Dr. Andrew Sung Park who said, “For Dr. Cone, Jesus Christ is black

³² McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 74

³³ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation (Twentieth Anniversary Edition)*, Twentieth anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 124.

because black equates to suffering.”³⁴ liberation theology, as evidenced in this chapter, carries a focus on Jesus as the great liberator. Black liberation theology, extends this thinking process further to identify Jesus as black.

While Idaho is not highly diverse, the diversity that does exist in the area around the Amity Campus tended to consist of persons who are black, based upon research in this manuscript. Seeing through the paradigm of Dr. Cone was foundational to a project related to increasing multicultural awareness. This topic re-emphasized, again, the concept of Kingdom of God previously mentioned. In fact, Dr. Cone, later in *A Black Theology of Liberation (Twentieth Anniversary Edition.)*, says,

The kingdom of God is what God does and repentance arises solely as a response to God’s liberation...The event of the kingdom today is the liberation struggle in the black community. It is where persons are suffering and dying for want of human dignity. It is thus incumbent upon all to see the event for what it is-God’s kingdom. This is what conversion means. Blacks are being converted because they see in the events around them the coming of the Lord, and will not be scared into closing their eyes to it. Black identity is too important.³⁵

The concept of identity was critical in the research project, as well. Creating a culture in which identity is valued and cultivated, even when that identity is different than others, must be valued in local churches not only from a church growth perspective as suggested by Shimron,³⁶ but also for the larger kingdom reasons cited by Boff and now by Cone.³⁷ These authors are in agreement that the journey to increase multicultural awareness must be a journey about kingdom and about identity.

³⁴ Park, “Modern and Current Theological Schools.”

³⁵ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 125.

³⁶ Shimron, “Study: Multiracial Methodist.”

³⁷ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 125.

The concept of black liberation theology had roots in Dr. Cone's younger life. In an interview on March 24 by Valerie Linson on PBS in a panel called, "The Faith Project and Blackside," Dr. Cone described growing up in Bearden, Arkansas which had a population of 400 blacks and 800 Whites. He said:

The Whites in Bearden tried to make us believe that God created black people to be White people's servants. White racism led to "separate but equal" school, segregated movies and restaurants, beatings and arrests, and political and economic inequality.³⁸

Linson documented Dr. Cone questioning "how the Whites in his town could consider themselves good Christians, and devised – 'but never enacted out of fear' – plans to disrupt their Sunday services and test their commitment to the Gospel.³⁹ Perhaps this is what the culturally homogeneous predominantly White church needs today: a disruption to test commitment to God. After all, this project designed to focus on multicultural awareness was intended to create some disruption in the thinking process and faith journey of the local church through adult education. Such a project must be more than just absorbing information. It needed to be formational and transformational if it were to increase multicultural awareness.

The goal of a multicultural awareness, in essence, is a discussion of integration. To this point, Dr. Cone provides wisdom in his formational text in black liberation theology, entitled, *Black Theology and Black Power*. In this book, Cone speaks to the heart of black liberation theology when he says,

If integration means accepting the White man's style, his values, or his religion, then the black man must refuse. There is nothing to integrate. The White man, in the very asking of the question, assumes that he has something which blacks want

³⁸ Valerie Linson, Interview with "James Cone" in *PBS-The Faith Project and Blackside*.

³⁹ Linson, Interview with "James Cone."

or should want, as if being close to White people enhances of the humanity of blacks...Black people cannot accept relationship on this basis.⁴⁰

This understanding of black liberation theology is critical to discussion regarding multicultural church expressions. If integration of the local church with a goal of multiculturalism is merely a front for a White church expectation that persons of color will merely adapt to existing culture, then the goal itself is flawed. Rather, this project designed to focus on multicultural awareness has embedded within it the value and identity of persons of color. It is beneficial and kingdom oriented to increase multicultural awareness in a predominantly White church. It must not be about merely “bringing ‘them’ in” to help grow a dying denomination.

Dr. Cone continues to address the concept of integration by offering a viable alternative to White-washing culture when he says [gendered language is original]:

On the other hand, if integration means that each man meets the other on equal footing, with neither possessing the ability to assert the rightness of his style over the other, then mutual meaningful dialogue is possible. biblically, this may be called the Kingdom of God.⁴¹

It is this definition of the “Kingdom of God” that the research project seeks to address. Creating a sense of multicultural awareness, awareness of power, awareness of privilege, awareness of worship uniqueness, awareness of conscious and unconscious aspects of racism, and awareness of Kingdom goals was the intent of the project.

I was privileged to interview Dr. James Cone personally in 2013, five years before his passing. It was on the occasion of the baptism of a grandchild of Dr. Cone. Dr.

⁴⁰ James H. Cone and Cornel West, *Black Theology and Black Power*.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2014784>
 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 17.

⁴¹ Cone & West, *Black Theology and Black Power*. 17.

Cone and I celebrated the baptism together and had significant time for discussion and interview. As a theological student and pastor, it was a joy to discuss Cone's somewhat challenging texts in a personal format directly with him. Prior to the interview, I confessed my White privilege was causing me to struggle with the concept that "God is black" and other concepts related to racism in the predominantly White church in which I was serving. During the interview, I asked Dr. Cone how a White pastor, serving in a predominantly White church, in a predominantly White state should read his text.⁴² After all, his text had not only challenged my understanding, but at times caused me to push back. Little did I know, I had prejudged Dr. Cone's work without even meeting him.

As we visited, I recognized I was talking with an icon of our faith tradition, a person that brought out the best in what the local church was called to be, even though the local church had not achieved it. Much more gently than anticipated, Dr. Cone responded with grace and challenged me directly to see the local church through the lens of those on the margins. He challenged me to consider why black persons in the neighborhood (in the Kansas City area) lived in the area but chose not to attend the church where I was appointed as pastor.⁴³ In his words he said, "Why do you think they drive past you to the black church?"⁴⁴ I wanted to answer with "music style" or other minimizing answers. The real reason, however, was that we were not a local church that focused on liberation and identity. It was a question that began a new thinking process for me, a process to challenge my deeply built-in and even sub-conscious thoughts about

⁴² James H. Cone, *Interview by Robert M. Walters* (Shawnee, KS: Monticello United Methodist Church, 2013).

⁴³ Cone, *Interview*.

⁴⁴ Cone, *Interview*.

race, the church, and Jesus. At the time, a White Jesus picture with blue eyes and blonde hair hung on the walls of my office. Dr. Cone, in the interview, pointed out the picture, and asked me, “What does someone like me see in that picture in your office?”⁴⁵ I was humbled, grieved, and convicted. The picture left my office that day later to be followed with a more historically accurate image of Jesus, a person of color. The catalyst for me was not just reading a text, but seeing the identity of the person in my office, a person with very different life experiences.

Baptism is a holy moment but, in that moment of baptism, there was also transformation for me. I recognized I had experienced a White-induced visceral reaction to Dr. Cone’s books, an element of White guilt. Dr. Cone, though, offered direction, grace, spiritual maturity, and challenged me to seek the Kingdom of God more akin to what he described in his books. I saw what I believe was my first inkling of the Black Jesus Dr. Cone described in his books. Ultimately, while I was studying black liberation theology and serving as a young pastor, I found I had failed to fully understand the Dr. Cone I read in his books. Those couple days, after incredible discussion with the founder of black liberation theology, have remained with me for many years. I found a humility in my understanding of God directly from Dr. Cone. It is that humility that formed the catalyst for this project to increase multicultural awareness. Dr. Cone was a gift to my ministry, one that unsettled me but also called me to see God in a new way.

In addition to Dr. Cone, there are other significant authors writing on the topic of black liberation theology. One such author, Deotis Roberts, supports Dr. Cone’s concept of Black Power. In his book, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, second

⁴⁵ Cone, *Interview*.

edition, he addresses the theological relationship between God and oppressed people. He says:

Blacks, in order to believe, are sustained by the presence and action of a God who is at once benevolent and provident. It is important that God be transcendent, that the divine be the ultimate standard of truth, holiness, love, goodness, and wisdom....Since Black Theology is addressed to a powerless people, a people seeking Black Power as a means of liberation from the oppressive control of White Power, the question concerning the omnipotence of God is of crucial importance...What is needed to inspire faith in the oppressed under the sustained domination of the oppressor is belief in a God of all-power who is able to promise the ultimate vindication of the good and the defeat of evil and injustice. The God of the Bible, the God of Jesus, is such a God.⁴⁶

In other words, God in black liberation theology is a God taking action, a God with the ability to conquer injustice, and a God that enables the powerless to become powerful. This is not often the preaching theme found in the local church that was the subject of this research project.

Liberation theology, according to Miguel De La Torre, describes this God and this form of theology by saying, “The liberating activity of the Bible and the experiences of God’s people resonated with black theologians...and they characterized their Redeemer from the structural sins of racism and classism as a Liberator.”⁴⁷ From this perspective, addressing systematic and structural sin, racism, and classism in a method that honors black liberation theology became a critical goal of the research project.

Ron Rhodes also writes on this topic in an article entitled, “Black Theology, Black Power, and the Black Experience” published in *Christian Research Journey*. He says, “Black theology largely foregoes intricate, philosophical views of God, focusing

⁴⁶ Deotis J. Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*. 2nd Edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 43.

⁴⁷ Miguel De La Torre, ed.. *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 12.

instead on God as ‘God in action,’ delivering the oppressed because of his righteousness.”⁴⁸ When Rhodes is contrasted to other Black Liberation Theologians, though, such as J. Deotis Roberts, they counter this thought and address the depth and richness of black liberation theology. In *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology. 2nd ed.*, Roberts speaks against this concept when he says:

Perception seems to override conception in African and Afro-American religion. In other words, black religion appears to be more existential than metaphysical. Intellection gives way to intuition. This does not imply that black religion is antirational. Feeling is intense, but black religion is more than feeling. It is volitional and cognitive as well as emotive. It is therefore “noetic” in a holistic sense. Knowledge in black religion is personal. It is closer to wisdom than rarified intellection.⁴⁹

The goal for a project related to multicultural awareness is less about integration, then, and more about seeking the holistic knowledge and wisdom found within black culture, a knowledge that should be deeply valued in all Kingdom-seeking churches.

In analyzing each author studied so far, each theologian in the liberation theology movement has tied the intent of the movement back to the imbalance of power and privilege in the local church. As such, black liberation theology is a method of seeing Jesus through the eyes of the oppressed. An example of this is connection is found *Jesus and the Disinherited* where Howard Thurman says,

Many and varied are the interpretations dealing with the teachings and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. But few of these interpretations deal with what the teachings and the life of Jesus have to say to those who stand, at a moment in human history, with their backs against the wall.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ron Rhodes, “Black Theology, Black Power, and the Black Experience.” *Christian Research Journal, Spring 1991*. Archived from the original on September 5, 2018.

⁴⁹ Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation*. 67.

⁵⁰ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 11.

This concept of Gospel carrying a specific message to those with “their backs against the wall”⁵¹ is the essence of black liberation theology, a theology tested in this project related to multicultural awareness and local church culture. Without this focal point, multicultural awareness cannot exist. As such, it is foundational to the project.

Thurman points out that Jesus was a Jew, but could have much more effectively expressed himself as a Roman.⁵² Thurman also identifies Jesus as part of the poor masses and a member of a minority group in the midst of a dominating class.⁵³ These factors are what identify, anthropomorphically, the heart of God as being with those who are on the margins of a dominant society. The author goes on to describe the need for a theological paradigm that counters the unholy merging of religion and oppression. He shares the story of visiting another country as a student when a Hindu person said to him:

Here you are in my country, standing deep within the Christian faith and tradition. I do not wish to seem rude to you. But, sir, I think you are a traitor to the darker peoples of the earth. I am wondering what you, an intelligent man, can say in defense of your position.⁵⁴

Such challenges in Thurman’s life are evident in his later writing where he, speaking of the Pauline letters through a lens of black liberation theology, says, “It would be grossly misleading and inaccurate to say that there are not to be found in the Pauline letters utterances of a deeply different quality-utterances which reveal how his conception transcended all barriers of race and class and condition.”⁵⁵ The concept to take away in a

⁵¹ Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 11.

⁵² Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 16.

⁵³ Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 17.

⁵⁴ Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 15.

⁵⁵ Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 33.

predominantly White church, then, is to read scripture through this lens of race and class and condition and risk being described (incorrectly) as “political.”

An inability to see the Gospel through a black liberation theological paradigm is found in too many local churches as denominations have historically been slow to respond to issues related to racism. One such example is the Southern Baptist Convention. It was not until June 1, 1995 when the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution that declared racism was “deplorable” and “lamented on a national scale.”⁵⁶ The resolution, entitled “Resolution on Racial Reconciliation On The 150th Anniversary Of The Southern Baptist Convention,” offered these acknowledgements for the systemic injury caused to non-White persons:

WHEREAS, Our relationship to African-Americans has been hindered from the beginning by the role that slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention; and

WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist forbears defended the right to own slaves, and either participated in, supported, or acquiesced in the particularly inhumane nature of American slavery; and

WHEREAS, In later years Southern Baptists failed, in many cases, to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, Racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence, both in the Civil War and throughout the history of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Racism has divided the body of Christ and Southern Baptists in particular, and separated us from our African-American brothers and sisters; and

WHEREAS, Many of our congregations have intentionally and/or unintentionally excluded African-Americans from worship, membership, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality, leading some Southern Baptists to believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are compatible with the Gospel...⁵⁷

⁵⁶ “Resolution on Racial Reconciliation On The 150th Anniversary Of The Southern Baptist Convention,” <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention/> (Nashville, TN: SBC Executive Committee).

⁵⁷ “Resolution on Racial Reconciliation.”

The Convention is to be both commended for these steps forward but also criticized for waiting until 1995 to do so. Nonetheless, it represents a theological challenge to ministry today to take similar actions. As evidenced in this study, the local church must take more concrete action to address a history of racism within the local church and the denomination.

Modern authors in the black liberation theology field address the future of this paradigm of thinking in the local church. In *Just Us or Justice? Moving Toward a Pan-Methodist Theology*, F. Douglas Powe suggests a starting point that could be beneficial for a future research project with the black experience at its core. He says:

African American scholars do not negate a Wesleyan perspective of experience, but they do take a somewhat different route with respect to experience. One of the major reasons for this is that their assumptions differ from those of most Wesleyan scholars in the following ways: (1) many African American scholars utilize black sources as a starting point for their work, and (2) most African American scholars believe the idea of liberation is central to their theological perspective. African American scholars believe that beginning with the black experience makes it possible to find the resources necessary to overcome structural oppression and eventually to move toward true liberation and justice.⁵⁸

The central concept in achieving awareness of multiculturalism for a predominantly White church, then, lies the in hearing of non-White experiences. To value the black experience and to challenge structural oppression was the beginning of the journey and must be a foundational element of any project in this genre of research.

⁵⁸ Douglas F. Powe, *Just Us or Justice? Moving Toward a Pan-Methodist Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 21.

Theological Relevance

The relevance of liberation theology in the modern day may be up to the work of theologians, preachers, and local churches. A theology that was, at one point, resisted by places like the Vatican is seeing a new relevance today. In an article entitled, “Catholic Church Warms to liberation theology as Founder Heads to Vatican” in *Guardian*, Stephanie Kirchgaessner reminds a Roman Catholic audience that church tradition and specifically the Vatican has not characteristically embraced Gustavo Gutiérrez’s version of progressive theology.⁵⁹ Kirchgaessner, in discussing a recent invitation from Pope Francis to Gutiérrez to speak at the Vatican, describes liberation theology at its prime in the 1960’s and 1970’s and refers to it as a “distinctly Latin American movement.”⁶⁰ This is also evidenced by research presented previously in this chapter regarding the origins of liberation theology. Kirchgaessner argues that supporters of a Latin American movement for liberation theology desire the church to be a “vehicle to push for fundamental political and structural changes that would eradicate poverty, even-some believed-if it meant supporting armed struggle against oppressors.”⁶¹

This theme of speaking truth to power is an uncomfortable theme, still today, in the church where this project originates. While the proverbial heart of parishioners is visible, preaching regarding being a “vehicle to push for fundamental political and structural changes”⁶² is often met with push-back, much as it was from the Vatican. It

⁵⁹ Stephanie Kirchgaessner, “Catholic Church Warms to Liberation Theology as Founder Heads to Vatican” in *Guardian* (Rome, Italy: Guardian News, 2015).

⁶⁰ Kirchgaessner, “Catholic Church Warms to Liberation Theology.”

⁶¹ Kirchgaessner, “Catholic Church Warms to Liberation Theology.”

⁶² Kirchgaessner, “Catholic Church Warms to Liberation Theology.”

seems the tradition of many White churches, regardless of denomination, is resistance to the concept of liberation theology, referring to it as “too political for the pulpit.”

Evidence in this chapter has shown the work of liberation theology to be Kingdom-driven and critical to physical and spiritual growth.

As found in McAlister, Gutiérrez provides an argument that theology and Christian worship cannot be separate. He says:

Theology is a ‘critical reflection on the Christian praxis in the light of the word of God.’ Theology is not, and should not be, detached from social involvement or political action.⁶³

This connection between theology and social involvement or political action has been a theme of the church which was the subject of this doctoral project. The congregation modeled a comfort level with the dialogue. The connection between theology and social involvement encountered some resistance from more traditional theological viewpoints within the church who were unwilling to engage the dialogue further. The concept was met with a slowly acquired relevance.

Authors such as Christopher Rowland, in *The Cambridge Companion to liberation theology (version 2nd ed.)*, address the slowly acquired relevance of liberation theology for a future generation. Rowland says,

It is true that mainstream theologians in the First World have been slow to accept liberation. Where the ethos of pedagogy is experiential, we find educational methods which owe much to the liberationist approach. There may not be many courses on liberation theology in universities, but those basic tenets, the attention to context, and the peculiar perspective of the marginalized (though with an impact on economically comfortable sectors of the Church), are a feature for

⁶³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction (version 6th edition)* (Newark, NJ: Wiley, 2017), 74

those with eyes to see, of much modern theology, both inside and outside the academy.”⁶⁴

To Rowland’s point, there may not be a significant number of university courses around liberation theology but there are, indeed, courses that center the paradigm of focus on the marginalized including a variety of disciplines from social work to psychology. Practitioners of theology today could do well to re-emphasize this vital area of theology in the local church.

This focus on the marginalized is a concept present in the writings of Dr. Obery Hendricks. In his book, *Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals Are Destroying Our National and our Faith*, Hendricks writes, “What is seldom voiced outside [right-wing evangelical] circles is that the eventual goal of right-wing evangelical leaders is to force every aspect of American life to genuflect at the altar of their narrow brand of Christianity.”⁶⁵ Hendricks addresses a judgmental version of Christianity that fails to include persons who are LGBTQIA+, immigrants, Muslims, and other groups of marginalized persons. In this regard, a detailed study of Liberation Theology for a modern church small group provides an opportunity to see marginalized populations in the Amity Campus neighborhood as fully a part of the body of Christ. The proverbial altar, as identified by Hendricks, must be open to all persons in the community.

⁶⁴ Christopher Rowland, *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (version 2nd ed.). The Cambridge Companions Complete Collection. <https://www-cambridge-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-liberation-theology/F500C9F34574087A4C4EA2658E89762B> (Cambridgeshire, England: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 306.

⁶⁵ Obery Hendricks, *Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals Are Destroying Our Nation and our Faith* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2021), 6.

To address the theological relevance of Liberation Theology, one must return to an author referenced previously in this analysis. Consideration was given to Miguel De La Torre’s statement, “Evil involves the conscious and unconscious exercise of individual and/or systemic agency toward injurious consequences for others.”⁶⁶ This is where the theological relevance of liberation theology and specifically black liberation theology connected deeply with this doctoral project. An example of this “injurious consequence” took place at the Cathedral of the Rockies, the main campus of the subject church in this project. In 2020, a decades-old stained-glass window of Robert E. Lee was removed. The window eventually replaced by a window of Bishop Leontine Kelly who, according to United Methodist News, was “a trailblazer, a spiritual mother, a bearer for women of color in leadership...and the first African-American woman bishop.”⁶⁷

From a Kingdom-mindset, this change should have been deeply embraced. While there was significant support from the community including the descendants of Robert E. Lee, himself, for making this change, there was also a vocal predominantly White minority in the community that opposed what they termed a “removal of history.” When this problem in the church is viewed through the paradigm of liberation theology and specifically black liberation theology, the previously examined words of Miguel De La Torre ring true: “evil involves the...unconscious exercise of...systemic agency toward injurious consequences for others.”⁶⁸ The imagery present in the worship space caused spiritual injury, at a minimum, to those in a marginalized and oppressed group and by

⁶⁶ De La Torre, *Handbook of U.S. Theologies*, 10.

⁶⁷ Kathy L. Gilbert, *Bishop Leontine Kelly Dies at 92* in UM News. <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/bishop-leontine-kelly-dies-at-92> (Nashville, TN: UM News, 2012.)

⁶⁸ De La Torre, *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation*. 10.

leaving it in place, the church was complicit in this unconscious (unintentional) injury.

The best theological decision was to remove it. In other words, the church was attempting to apply Jesus values in a Robert E. Lee world.

The pushback that followed from a small vocal minority of White persons represents a type of theological thinking process devoid of liberation theology and is evidence for the importance of a revitalization of these discussions in local churches. In fact, a predominantly White thinking process can easily cloud our understanding of the Kingdom role of the local church, especially in a context when a paradigm of liberation may not always be present. It is not always intention that causes spiritual injury. It can be a lack of awareness. This focus on liberation theology remains vitally relevant not only to the future of the local church but also to this doctoral project that increased multicultural awareness in one local church.

Summary

Liberation theology offered a foundation for this project to increase multicultural awareness through adult education in a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho. As such, this chapter examined liberation theology, the themes within liberation theology with a focus on black liberation theology, and the relevance of this theological movement. As such, this chapter analyzed several key figures and theological concepts within liberation theology.

From its origins in Latino/a cultural and religious circles, liberation theology offers a paradigm of seeing God through the eyes of the oppressed. The movement's transition into Black Liberation circles provides a special focus for a state, Idaho, that is

nearly all-White and local churches that model less diversity than the communities in which they reside. The topic was foundational because it called the local church to change its thought process. The local church is called to provide a Kingdom focus and offer a place of reconciliation, a place of seeing Jesus more clearly. The goal is reconciliation through valuing the identity of persons of color, valuing their unique stories, and creating systemic change to power systems within local churches.

Jody Miller Shearer describes this goal of reconciliation in the way she frames Jesus, a Galilean. In *Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation*, Shearer says,

You knew a Galilean when you met one. In addition to the way they butchered proper speech, they were poor. Dirt poor. Poor in every way that mattered. They were stubborn and backwards, not to mention impure. In a word, inferior. Jesus knew prejudice. He was from Galilee.⁶⁹

In echoing this thought, this local church worships a Messiah who was, himself, oppressed and eventually executed by society. This undeniable fact calls us to work toward reconciliation not because persons of color need the White church, but because the White church needs to look more like the Kingdom of God in its challenge to power. Just as I pre-judged Dr. Cone unfairly, the local church, much too easily, falls into the trap of power and privilege and falls short of what God calls the church to be.

This doctoral project offered adult educational opportunities designed to challenge the systemic racism embedded in the local church. Through this doctoral project, liberation theology served as a foundational theological concept as participants heard and prayerfully embraced the emotive stories of persons of color who willingly and

⁶⁹ Jody Miller Shearer, *Healing Steps from White Privilege Toward Racial Reconciliation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 51.

courageously shared personal experience. This educational time impacted not only the mind, but the heart of the local church, as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

This discussion thus far has utilized a biblical foundation, historical foundation, and a theological foundation for a doctoral project completed at the Amity Campus of the Cathedral of the Rockies, a church with a difference between the cultural make-up of the congregation and the make-up of the community in which the local church it is located. As a result, a project designed to increase multi-cultural awareness became a goal for this congregation. The hypothesis of this research study was: “Using the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) as a tool and with the scholarly leadership of multiple guest teachers who are persons of color, a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho will develop increased multicultural awareness that prepares it to embrace a culturally diverse community.”

A final foundation for this project was an interdisciplinary study. A great deal of work has been done by many dedicated servants of God over the last fifteen years in ministry and the secular sector to address multiculturalism. This work informed the project and offered a foundation to test the hypothesis by executing a plan intended to increase multicultural awareness. The intent of this chapter is to develop an interdisciplinary foundation by examining contemporary theory as well as biases and generalizations regarding the topic. Lastly, this chapter will identify resources related to the field of adult education both in the ministry field and the secular sector.

Local Church Work

In local church ministry, more work has been done in recent years to develop multicultural awareness. This work can guide churches on how to begin this discussion. This portion of the chapter will explore models for multicultural awareness in ministry that were developed by others.

One such foundational tool and example of contemporary work being done in local churches is found in Douglas Brouwer's, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*. This is an effective resource for churches to consider when attempting to become multicultural, but, more importantly, it provides foundational steps to begin the journey toward multicultural awareness which must occur prior to engaging true multicultural ministry. While the vast majority of this text is helpful, there are three foundational elements present in *How to Become a Multicultural Church* that informed the approach to this research project.

First, Brouwer explains how to welcome guest teachers who are representative of a variety of cultures and races. He challenges a question participants tended to ask each other: "Where are you from?" Brouwer suggests that, when White people ask such a question, it can be interpreted as hostile and threatening.¹ In preparing the approach to the research project, it was important to set a proper tone with participants using guided questions. The intention was to create an atmosphere ripe for learning and characterized by respect.

¹ Douglas J. Brouwer, and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *How to Become a Multicultural Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 20.

Secondly, Brouwer suggests being “theologically generous”² when approaching multicultural discussions, specifically in the area of denominational doctrines, sacraments, confessions, and creeds. A bias that a predominantly White congregation might hold is the idea that creeds and collective confessions unite us. Brouwer suggests a researcher locate other means of unification.³ As a result, this project used story to inspire and unite teacher and student.

Gatherings of diverse persons will inevitably involve diverse theological opinions. One of the biases that must be excised, then, is an assumption that, because all identify as United Methodist, they carry similar cultural beliefs and practices. Brouwer, though, suggests a focus on biblical hospitality, instead of diverse identities.⁴ As a result of this learning, the small group classes in this project focused less on probing questions and more on creating unity through hospitality.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership also provided multiple resources that are foundational to this research study. In the article, “4 Goals that Promote Healthy Multicultural Ministry,” Albert Shuler says, “Healthy interaction is based first upon confidence about the value of one’s own culture and a sense of security that it is not threatened by the encountering of difference.”⁵ In theory, this assumption could work well in truly multicultural gatherings, but it might be more problematic in a predominantly White environment with few persons of color. Effort was taken in the

² Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*, 47.

³ Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*, 47.

⁴ Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*, 47.

⁵ Albert Shuler, *4 Goals that Promote Healthy Multicultural Ministry*, <https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/4-goals-that-promote-healthy-multicultural-ministry/> (Washington, DC: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, 2019).

group gathering process to ensure a dominant culture was not “over-confident” in itself and hence less open to receiving the voice of a minority culture. Shuler suggests intentional practices that reduce conflict, recognize others, respect cultural differences, and foster healthy interaction between cultures. This set of ideas supported the project’s pre-study conversations around appropriate conduct in class sessions led by guest teachers.

An assumption to be tested in this research study was that hearing emotive stories from persons who have experienced racism in local churches will increase multicultural awareness. One resource that helps to bring the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus was Carolyn Helsel’s *Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism*. Helsel argues that stories can be powerful but must be delivered in a safe space with intentionality. She suggests such stories (in an in-person situation) could involve rooms for sharing, rooms for lighter conversation and hospitality, and spaces that provide counseling for those in need.⁶ At first, it was clear there would be challenges with employing this strategy using a Zoom video conferencing platform. The solution was to mute all microphones, require the use of video for in-person facial expressions and to promote human connection, and launch breakout rooms for lighter discussion and hospitality. With twenty-eight people on Zoom, this regard for safety in all-digital environment was critical so forum passwords and the prevention of recording was implemented.

⁶ Carolyn B. Helsel, *Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully About Racism* (Nashville, TN: Chalice Press, 2018), 68.

Another resource foundational to the theme of multicultural awareness is, *Moving Faith Communities to Fruitful Conversations About Race*. In this video series on contemporary work in multicultural awareness, The Lewis Center for Church Leadership features a variety of panelists who coach local church leaders how to have conversations about race in church. Dr. Doug Powe challenges churches who want to have this discussion to define their purpose first. Powe cites Revelation 21:1-2a:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of the heavens from God.⁷

He argues that the rationale for having multicultural awareness conversations must have the goals of participating in God's work, creating a new Jerusalem, and ensuring all persons have identity in the local church.⁸ This concept was foundational to the project as it challenged the assumption that the people in any given exercise were committed to ending racism and increasing the church's multicultural awareness. As a result of this learning, the introductory session of this research project was purpose-driven, establishing a biblical rationale for why the church must engage in this conversation.

Safe spaces and purpose-driven conversations require a level of respect within the small group. In *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*, Douglas Brouwer addresses the concept of the "Golden Rule." Brouwer states that, while many grow up learning to "treat others the way *you* want to be treated," this practice does not

⁷ Doug Powe, *Moving Faith Communities to Fruitful Conversations about Race*, <https://www.churchleadership.com/videos/moving-faith-communities-fruitful-conversations-race/> (Washington, D.C.: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, 2017).

⁸ Powe, *Moving Faith Communities to Fruitful Conversations about Race*.

always work well in multicultural learning settings with adults.⁹ Brouwer says a different concept of respect is needed.¹⁰ Brouwer gave examples that, in some cultures, eye contact is deeply valued, while in other cultures avoiding eye contact is a way of showing respect.¹¹ Another example he cites is the example of being direct and blunt in response to a question. This is valued in some cultures, while an overabundance of politeness may be valued in another.¹² Brouwer offers a “Platinum Rule: Treat others as *they* want to be treated” and suggests this is required for successful multicultural discussion.¹³ This form of respect was implemented into this research project, a form of respect that called students to re-define “love your neighbor as yourself.” In a multicultural conversation such as this research project, the way participants were called to love others was to love them the way they want to be loved. The study began with discussion regarding valuing the other’s culture, practices, and habits. This was important material for the introductory session as it shaped participant conduct.

Regarding the approach to the research study, eight guest teachers taught who were persons of color. Despite this, I am White and faced with the dilemma of being a White pastor in White church speaking about race. In this approach, significant consideration took place regarding whether the White pastor should or should not take a teaching role in one of the weeks. An assumption was made that the teaching roles should

⁹ Douglas Brouwer, *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*, <https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/multicultural-churches-variation-golden-rule/> (Washington D.C.: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, 2017).

¹⁰ Douglas J. Brouwer, *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*.

¹¹ Douglas J. Brouwer, *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*.

¹² Douglas J. Brouwer, *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*.

¹³ Brouwer, *For Multicultural Churches-A Variation on the Golden Rule*.

be limited to persons of color in order to model respect but foundational resources addressed this topic differently.

Anne Michael, in an interview entitled, *Leading Ideas Talks: An Interview with Carolyn Helsel*, questions Helsel about being a White pastor in a White church and addressing the issue of race. Helsel tells the interviewer she found it helpful to name herself as a White person, a racialized person with unfair advantages.¹⁴ Helsel calls other clergy to not expect persons of color to live with racism and also do all the teaching but rather for White people to educate themselves.¹⁵ This point about a White person being the primary leader for White people and speaking about race, though, continued to generate concern as the research study grew closer.

As a result, further confirmation and additional resources were sought from another ministry leader in the field. Kristina Gonzales serves as director of innovation for an inclusive church for the Greater Northwest Area of the UMC. In a first-hand interview Gonzales shared her professional expertise. When asked about the methodology of the upcoming research project, Gonzales provided strong feedback that a White pastor should be the first to speak prior to persons of color leading subsequent weeks.¹⁶ Gonzales urged an approach to the study that required the White pastor in a position of privilege and power to call out systemic racism in churches, name the rationale and purpose for the

¹⁴ Anne Michael, *Leading Ideas Talks: An Interview with Carolyn Helsel*, <https://www.churchleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/LIT-2018-11-14-racism-conversations-communities.mp3> (Washington, DC: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, 2017).

¹⁵ Michael, *Leading Ideas*.

¹⁶ Kristina Gonzalez, *Multicultural Interview* with Robert Walters (Portland, OR: February 22, 2021).

study, and set the tone for safe conduct and dialogue.¹⁷ As a result of this foundational learning, the initial assumption present in the design of the research study that all voices should be persons of color was challenged and modifications made. In the final version of the research study, the White pastor taught the first session addressing the topics suggested by both Helsel and Gonzales. These resources called initial assumptions and bias in this research study to be challenged and resulted in project modification.

This concept is supported in the work of Lillian Smith, Rev. Rudy Rasmus, Erin Beasley, Justin Coleman, Jevon Caldwell-Groww, Pamela Lightsey, F. Willis Johnson, Vance P. Ross, Rodney Lorenzo Grave, and Tori Butler in their book, *I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist*. The text reminds us that “we must find the courage to say unambiguously *Black Lives Matter*, *Black Life Matters*. To stumble or choke on those words is beneath the gospel.”¹⁸ If the White pastor in the White church does not directly address these issues at the forefront, the project would not have been authentic.

A final area of learning regarding current ministry practices revolved around the end result of such multicultural work. There was a time historically where multicultural and multiracial churches struggled to stabilize.¹⁹ So, parishioners may have been biased in this area, carrying an assumption into the research study. Significant quality multicultural work is being done today at multiple churches including examples such as Good Samaritan United Methodist Church (Cupertino, CA), Garfield Memorial United

¹⁷ Kristina Gonzalez.

¹⁸ Lillian Smith, et. al, *I'm Black. I'm Christian. I'm Methodist*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020).

¹⁹ Heather Hahn, *Racial Diversity Linked to Church Growth*, <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/racial-diversity-linked-to-church-growth> (Nashville, TN: UM News, 2021).

Methodist Church (Cleveland, OH), Argenta United Methodist Church (North Little Rock, AK), and City Well (Durham, NC). Their growth is supported by more contemporary research as well from Kevin Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, and Todd Ferguson as published in *Social Forces*. In an article entitled, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990-2010,” the authors found that while attendance is declining across United Methodist churches, racial diversity inside a church is associated with higher average attendance by year and across years.²⁰

In light of this foundational research, one would expect a project might choose the goal of multicultural church immediately. Most successful multicultural churches cited above, though, are well into their journey to be multicultural or have been multicultural since the beginning. The Amity Campus was in a different place at the start of a multicultural journey. As such, the focus of the research study was limited to multicultural awareness with hopes it would become the catalyst for multicultural ministry in the future. This awareness was critical to project development as it limits the scope to something that can be successfully measured. It addressed a weakness of the study design previously that was too broad in nature and narrows the focus to the topic of multicultural awareness and addresses a measurable outcome.

²⁰ Kevin D. Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, Todd W Ferguson, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990–2010,” *Social Forces*, Volume 100, Issue 1, September 2021, Pages 345–374, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaa124>.

Secular Work

In addition to contemporary ministry work on the topic of multicultural awareness, there are interdisciplinary practices in the secular arena that were foundational, as well. This portion of this chapter will address a practice that informs the thesis for this doctoral project. This section will address adult educational methodologies with a focus on the topic of race. Attention will also be given to measurement tools available in adult education on the topic of race that informed the methodology of the project.

In constructing the DMin project, research into effective teaching methods for discussing race was crucial. Discussion of race in the state of Idaho is frequently covered in local news with soundbites and divisive debate rather than helpful dialogue. Local universities near the Amity Campus, that exist in a predominantly White state, are often faced with public ridicule when attempting to teach race-related issues. As a result, research into what other educational systems are doing to teach race was foundational. Jess Achilleos, Hayley Douglas, and Yasmin Washbrook offer an article in *Education Sciences* entitled “Educating Information Educators on Issues of Race and Inequality: Raising Critical Consciousness Identifying Challenges, and Implementing Change in a Youth and Community Work Programme.” The authors admit the controversial nature of racial equality discussions in adult education.²¹ Then, they offer results of their research when they say, “The process of critical reflection on race, oppression, and White

²¹ Jess Achilleos, Hayley Douglas, and Yasmin Washbrook, “Educating Informal Educators on Issues of Race and Inequality: Raising Critical Consciousness, Identifying Challenges, and Implementing Change in a Youth and Community Work Programme.” *Education Sciences*, Volume 11, Issue 410, 2021, pages 345–374, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080410>.

privilege led to an acknowledgement that ‘We know we aren’t perfect, but we are opening ourselves up to be vulnerable to bring about change.’”²² The value of reflection time in their research was foundational to their study.

Attention was given to this interdisciplinary work DMin project. Based on the evidence from Achilleos, the DMin project allowed for adequate reflection outside of learning moments. As a project methodology for this study, critical reflection time was accomplished through debrief questions as a group following a presentation by a guest teacher, allowing adequate time for processing and discussion. Secondarily, the Achilleos study also offered a goal formation to this DMin project. Students were guided to an awareness of vulnerability. When students left more open and more vulnerable than they started, progress was made toward multicultural awareness. Through the use of proper informed consent, a participant covenant, and advance discussion with the guest teachers, developing an awareness of vulnerability was a foundational element of the study.

Specific methodologies and practices were helpful in the project including a focus on incorporating reflection time. This focus is also apparent in research about effective adult educational methods elsewhere. An example of this is in Jack Mezirow’s 2009 text called, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. In it, he identifies “core elements” required for a transformational learning experience for adults.²³ He identifies individual experience, critical reflection,

²² Jess Achilleos, Hayley Douglas, and Yasmin Washbrook, “Educating Informal Educators.”

²³ Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. Jossey-Bass Higher Education Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

and dialogue as foundational for learning to take place.²⁴ In applying this to the DMin project, individual experience was obtained through storytelling and teaching from guest teachers. Critical reflection and dialogue time was integrated to allow for processing and transformation to occur.

An additional teaching method with adults is developing a common language. One program that models this in the educational field is IUPUI who operates a program called the “White Racial Literacy Project” into which young adults are encouraged to enter at the beginning of their adult education experience. The University program material says, “this project enhances participants’ racial literacy to realize that racial equity efforts should and must include White people.”²⁵ For IUPUI, this program addresses implicit bias and lack of knowledge²⁶ which are also visible in a predominantly White church environment. Based on discussion with prospective DMin project students, there was an assumption that a study in the church regarding race was more about incorporating persons of color and less about transforming the White culture within. Therefore, this DMin project worked to develop awareness of implicit bias and confront the church’s lack of knowledge in areas of race. IUPUI provided numerous resources to aid this group exploration via their website.

A built-in assumption in a project where subjects volunteer to participate is that they, using informed consent, know the topic thus reducing some anxiety. Despite that, Stephanie Creary in *A framework for Leading Classroom Conversations About Race*

²⁴ Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Learning*.

²⁵ *White Racial Literacy Project*, <https://diversity.iupui.edu/initiatives/White-racial-literacy-project/index.html> (Indiana, IN: IUPUI, 2021).

²⁶ *White Racial Literacy Project*.

published in Harvard Business Publishing-Education identifies the challenge with anxiety. She says,

Many people feel uncomfortable talking about race and were taught not to mention someone's race (in other words to be colorblind). They also fear being called racist.²⁷

Creary challenges the educator to speak of race directly and openly despite the anxiety and to create a norm around such discussion.²⁸ As a result, this concept was addressed in the first introductory session of the DMin project. Rather than “easing into” the topic, using language around White privilege, racism, and oppression were normalized. There is one assumption present in Creary’s work though. She makes an assumption that the anxious persons are White. A concern in preparing for the DMin project was that the anxiety could have been on the part of both the students and the persons of color who were invited to teach. Creating safe space was for effective adult education to take place was critical from the beginning of the planning process.

Vanderbilt University’s Center for Teaching offers instruction on effectively teaching adults regarding race-related issues. In *Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice*, Amie Thurber, M. Brielle Harbin, and Joe Bandy speak to the challenges present in this type of adult education. They recommend addressing the challenges by “normalizing difficulty” through reminders that challenging long-held beliefs causes discomfort.²⁹ Like the previous authors, Thurber also encourages reflection time and suggest a process

²⁷ Stephanie Creary, *A Framework for Leading Classroom Conversations About Race*. <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/a-framework-for-leading-classroom-conversations-about-race> (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Publishing-Education, 2020).

²⁸ Stephanie Creary, “A Framework.”

²⁹ Al Thurber, M.B. Harbin, & J. Bandy, *Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice*, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-race> (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching).

of writing down concerns adult students have talking about race and then sharing those reflecting in pairs or triads.³⁰ This concept was foundational to the methodology of this DMin project in that reflection time was built in weekly to allow students to process any discomfort they might have experienced. Initially, the assumption present was that the group would reflect and debrief with the guest teacher. Due to this learning, though, reflection time was designed into the project without the guest teacher to allow time and space to share feelings, especially when challenging deeply held beliefs.

Selection of appropriate guest teachers was also foundational to the research project. Identifying guest teachers who were willing and able to be the most effective in challenging racism and oppression within the local church and larger church governing bodies was important. Lacey Schauwecker and Elizabeth Galoozis, in “Creating Effective Antiracist Pedagogy Discussions” published in *Inside Higher Ed* addressed the selection of speakers as part of six guidelines for teaching issues related to race to adults. The authors said their best conversations regarding race came from people who did not identify as experts.³¹ They suggested breaking larger groups up into smaller groups to persons with similar levels of expertise can dialogue together. Pairs or triads, as suggested by the author, could be accomplished via Zoom, but were not implemented in this study as additional advance preparation is needed to ensure the technological tool is set-up properly ahead of time. Plus, 100% attendance is also required to effectively

³⁰ Al Thurber, Al. *Teaching Race*.

³¹ Lacey Schauwecker and Elizabeth Galoozis, “Creating Effective Antiracist Pedagogy Discussions” in *Inside Higher Ed*, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/06/25/how-organize-opt-antiracist-pedagogy-discussions-professional-growth-opinion> (Washington DC: Inside Higher Ed, 2019).

manage these breakout groups as absences would have meant significant technical time adjusting to cover absences during class rather than beginning the debrief.

An interdisciplinary look at another teaching institution, Carnegie Mellon University, yields a suggestion in *Confronting Racism and Promoting Equity and Inclusion*. The university developed a program to intentionally diversify speakers in its University Lecture Series.³² Amy Burkert, the Vice Provost for Education promoted a change to adult learning open to the community that allowed teachers of color time to engage with students via roundtable events with the focused topic of anti-racism.³³ The intentional diversification of teachers included inviting people from a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds to engage with students.

This teaching methodology was applicable to this DMin project, as well, in that teacher selections were based first on the instructional effectiveness of the teacher and on an intentional diversification of cultures. Rather than just a presentation, though, time was allotted for adult participants to engage and discuss with the teacher.

Interdisciplinary research, thus far, has indicated several teaching methods that are foundational to research conducted at the Amity Campus. Addressing anxiety directly was key for both the White parishioners and the guest teachers. Creating time for group dialogue with the speaker was a useful teaching method to develop relationship. Plus, creating time in the schedule for debriefing created transformative learning based on the evidence from other teaching institutions.

³² Amy Burkert, *Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice*, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-race> (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, 2019).

³³ Amy Burkert.

In addition to teaching methods, though, an additional challenge to the study was selecting the proper measurement tool to evaluate increased multicultural awareness in an adult educational setting. Critical examination of contemporary work in adult education on the topic of race outside the church environment offered three potential measurement tools that will be discussed here. For this comparison, categories considered include scholarly validation in dialogue with experts in the field, price to utilize the topic per subject, content measured in the assessment, length of time required for each participant to complete the assessment, the quality of comparative reports, and the cost for a professional certification/administrator, or other training required to administer the assessment.

The first tool considered to evaluate adult education on the topic of race was the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)³⁴ provided by IDI, LLC. Interdisciplinary research provides evidence that, of the three tools considered, the IDI has the largest amount of scholarly validation across cultures.³⁵ Interdisciplinary research into this tool revealed two substantial issues. The first was the time required to adequately train to administer to use this tool, seek certification, and execute the tool exceeded the time frame possible for this DMin project. In addition, the DMin project involved testing the effectiveness of adult education on the topic of race using a pretest/posttest model. According Dr. Michell Hammer in *A Resource Guide for Effectively Using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)*,³⁶ testing the effectiveness of instruction in this

³⁴ *The Roadmap to Intercultural Competence Using the IDI*, <https://idiinventory.com> (Olney, MD: IDI, LLC, 2021).

³⁵ *The Roadmap to Intercultural Competence Using the IDI*.

fashion is a prohibited use of the IDI.³⁶ As a result, research into this tool indicated that while it is used in multiple educational institutions as a one-time test, it is not viable for this project's pre-test and post-test model.

The second tool considered was the Cultural Quotient (CQ)³⁷ assessment provided by the Cultural Intelligence Center. Research indicated this inventory was excellent but involved financial costs too high for the all-volunteer student group involved in this study.

The third tool considered was the Intercultural Effectiveness Survey (IES)³⁸ produced by Aperian Global with debrief material released in 2021 provided by Joyce Osland. Osland serves as the Executive Director of the Global Leadership Advancement Center and professor at San Jose State University and is an educator and facilitator of adult education on the topic of race. In a text called, *Research Studies Using the IES*, Osland details the methodology of this measurement tool for adult education on the topic of race.³⁹ Regarding that methodology, Osland said, multicultural awareness "should be measured quantitatively using scores from a standard assessment in areas of continuous learning, interpersonal engagement, and hardiness."⁴⁰ Research demonstrated this tool had a reasonable cost, short time span for users, and substantial validation data. Kristina

³⁶ Mitchell Hammer, *Intercultural Development Inventory Resource Guide*, (Berlin, MD: IDI. LLC, 2012).

³⁷ *Solutions for Faith-Based Organizations*, <https://culturalq.com/purchase/purchase-for-your-organization/faith-based/> (Grand Rapids, MI: Cultural Intelligence Center, 2021).

³⁸ *Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES)*, <https://www.globesmart.com/products/intercultural-effectiveness-scale/> (Oakland, CA: Aperian Global, 2021).

³⁹ Joyce Osland, *Research Studies Using the IES*, <https://www.kozaigroup.com/intercultural-skills/> (Chesterfield, MO: Kozai Group, 2021).

⁴⁰ Joyce Osland, *Understanding the IES Dimensions*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHqRIHBv7n0> (Chesterfield, MO: Kozai Group, 2020).

Gonzalez, who develops curriculum and offers leadership development with a specialty in intercultural competency, was again consulted as an expert in the field. In a personal interview, she compared her experience with the IDI, read about the CQ assessment, and, in the end, suggested there would be a benefit in utilizing the IES tool as it was a more accessible though less studied tool in the field of adult education on the topic of race.⁴¹ As a result of this comparative interdisciplinary research into assessment tools used in the secular world, the tool selected for this project was the IES.

This was a departure from initial assumptions that the IDI would be the selected choice. The IES, though, was formational to the DMin project as it gave three target areas where participants commit to ongoing learning and also focus on engagement with the topic and with each other. Offering these potential topics to guest teachers as areas of focus brought cohesiveness and narrowed the focus of small learning sessions.

Study of interdisciplinary methodology and practice related to adult education on the topic of race informed both the approach to teaching race and the way in which progress was assessed. This connected research in the church to resources used outside ministry and was foundational to the development of the DMin project.

Conclusion

This interdisciplinary study was formational to the research project in several foundational ways. Through an analysis of contemporary work in ministry area theoretical practices, multiple resources were identified as well as assumptions and bias

⁴¹ Kristina Gonzales, *Multicultural Interview*.

that affected the project design. Discussion was given to what has worked in contemporary ministry practitioners and what needed reconsideration.

As a result of these foundational learnings, the key approach to this research project was less probing and more focused on safe space to share emotive story. Critical analysis of contemporary ministry practices was addressed and the study was structured to be open and hospitality-centered. These areas were addressed through adequate group instruction at the beginning and also a discussion of conduct. The conversation, in addition, was purpose-drive with a shared common goal for group gatherings so the development of a biblically-centered methodology was important. While intentionally valuing the identity and stories of speakers of color, the White pastor in a White church led the first session by challenging bias, racism, and assumptions as well as establishing a combined goal. Contemporary ministry work modeled the importance of building group cohesion and practicing respectful dialogue by considering how the other person chooses to be treated first. Lastly, longitudinal research modeled that growth can occur as a result of this work but the project goal of creating a multicultural church was too large and was then limited in scope to multicultural awareness. Learning as a result of this interdisciplinary examination was foundational to the project preparation and was applied in the project execution phase.

In addition to teaching race in the practice of ministry, teaching methods and practices in adult education on the topic of race were also analyzed. Evidence from interdisciplinary research presented here shows that the creation of intentional reflection time when discussing race is foundational to the success of the dialogue. As a result, this was incorporated into the methodology of the DMin project through the use of targeted

debriefing time. Research addressed in this chapter in adult education in higher education atmospheres indicated support for this concept of reflection time but added that transformative learning occurs when vulnerability is present. This was acquired in the project through proper informed consent and adequate discussion from guest teachers. The concept of storytelling identified through interdisciplinary research was a foundational element to the DMin project as guest teachers shared their own personal encounters with racism. One of the most visible results of interdisciplinary research, though, was to expect anxiety in a variety of forms and to normalize that anxiety early so addressing this topic began during information sessions rather than during guest speaker classes. Finally, the importance of selection of diversified guest teachers was identified through interdisciplinary exploration, as well, so the speakers selected represented a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities.

While teaching methods from adult education with a focus on race were foundational to this project, proper selection of methodologies was also critical. Through the interdisciplinary task of examining assessment tools implemented outside the church to assess teaching regarding race with adults, the IES became a foundational element to the project. Evidence in this research showed this tool was not only affordable and capable of being completed in a timely manner in a remote environment, but it was also highly effective.

The practice of ministry yielded foundational elements for the upcoming project. The field of adult education with an emphasis on race also yielded significant insight that shaped the project design and implementation to be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Throughout the doctor of ministry program, I was challenged as a ministry professional and as a student to be alert for the integration between my own journey, the ministry focus in which I serve, and the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary research presented in this document. This introduction to my project analysis will explain how these elements came together to produce the doctor of ministry research project analyzed in this chapter.

The integration began with my ministry setting. When I came to the Amity Campus, I encountered the vision statement, “All Means All” posted on walls, in print publications, websites, and social media. It was apparent to me that the church was realizing this vision in many ways. That said, this very loving and welcoming campus was also demographically homogeneous. At the time of the ministry focus research, Idaho was 93.0% Caucasian according to the United States Census Bureau,¹ yet the Amity Campus was in an area that was more culturally diverse than the rest of the state.² In addition to the local church not matching the cultural make-up of the community, the Amity Campus had also struggled with sustainability. Evidence observed through

¹ United States Census Bureau, *Quick Facts: Idaho*, www.census.gov (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013).

² “Full Insite Report,” <https://missioninsite.com> (Irvine, CA: Mission Insite, 2019).

research for this document showed that Methodist churches with internal racial diversity were associated with higher-than-average attendance.³ In researching the ministry focus, the problem to be solved through a project was immediately evident: To truly welcome “all,” attendees at the Amity Campus needed to increase their multicultural awareness through adult education to better connect with a diverse community. As a result, the Amity Campus needed to break down the justice barriers and better serve as a neighbor to the community in which it was located if it wanted to develop sustainable ministry over the years ahead.

In addition to the ministry focus and research problem to solve, a clear biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundation was integrated into the project. The biblical foundation emerged from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians. Paul writes, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Evidence in the biblical Foundations chapter indicated Paul was writing to a group of persons who did not share a common ethnicity but were termed “Galatian” as a result of political assignment and culture. Paul identified the recipients of his letter as Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female, and thereby emphasized the diverse cultures present at the time. As shared in the biblical foundations chapter, Paul was not discounting the multicultural aspect of the Galatian culture nor was he calling for the church to ignore the uniqueness of Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female in the body of Christ. Paul was, rather, calling the

³ Kevin D. Dougherty, Gerardo Martí, and Todd W Ferguson, “Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations, 1990–2010,” *Social Forces*, Volume 100, Issue 1, September 2021, Pages 345–374, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaa124>

church to shift its identity from individualism to communalism, from law to faith, from legalism to grace, and toward identity in Christ.

Paul's concept of identity in Christ affirmed the concept of multiculturalism in church. Persons in the local church at the Amity Campus and community surrounding it may not be described today as Jew-Greek, slave-free, male-female, but the need for identity in Christ remains. In line with this imperative, the project was designed to include opportunities to learn from guest teachers, to connect people on both an academic and personal level, and to craft an environment where awareness of diverse cultures was increased and valued.

In addition to the biblical foundation, the project analyzed in this chapter has a historical foundation. As evidenced in the historical chapter, the Methodist Episcopal Church was eager to accept all persons, but it was still infected with the evil of racism. The Methodist Church had been challenged by John Wesley to reject slavery, but the successful implementation of anti-racist practices took many decades. Philadelphia's St. George's Church was cited as an example of a congregation that verbally opposed slavery, but which relegated African Americans, both slave and free, to segregated seating. When observing this, Richard Allen, a former slave turned pastor, led a walkout that served as a catalyst to the development of the Free African Society and later the African Methodist Episcopal Church—which he served as its first Bishop.

The racial divide in the local church was present in the 1700's and still exists in a different form in the present day between the nearly all-White Amity Campus and its local community. This was evidenced in the lack of diversity in worship experiences I observed and led as a pastor. While serving the people, I had often heard the opinion that

racism did not currently exist in today's UMC. In a riposte to that, the adult education project completed at the Amity Campus that is outlined in this chapter offered participants an opportunity to understand the history of racism in many churches, understand the issues behind the division of the early denomination, recognize how persons of color perceive all-White churches, and hear stories of the impact racism still has on individuals in the UMC. In this respect, history is in direct dialog with this project.

In addition to the biblical and historical foundations, this project had a theological foundation as well. As evidenced in the theological chapter, liberation theology originated in Latino/a cultural and religious circles but quickly spread to other populations feeling oppressed by social and religious institutions. Liberation and black liberation theology offer models for understanding the disposition of majority-White churches and the Amity Campus. Liberation theology calls on the church to provide a Kingdom focus and offer a space where reconciliation can happen—where Jesus can be seen more clearly. This comes about when the local church deeply values the identity of persons of color, values their stories, and creates systemic change in networks of power. Liberation theology does not call the church to be multicultural because persons of color need the church, but because White churches need to look more like the Kingdom of God.

This theological foundation was critical to the research project because it offered a means to embrace the emotive stories of guest teachers in an educational situation. These stories challenged participants to see Jesus for who he was, a Messiah who was, himself, oppressed and eventually executed by society. The integration of this theological

foundation informed this project. It was been designed to lift up the voices of those whom the White church has failed to hear, or those whom it has devalued.

Finally, the project had an interdisciplinary foundation, too. Race and culture work was examined that is being done in many areas of ministry as well as in the secular world. As explored in the interdisciplinary chapter, research suggests that this type of adult education found its greatest success in settings where participants were theologically open and hospitality-centered. It benefitted strongly from the valorization of identities and stories of speakers of color, and from White pastors in White churches addressing bias and racism. This was foundational to the project implementation.

In examining interdisciplinary research in the field of adult education with a focus on race, evidence showed the need for diversification in teachers, a need to address anxiety in an open and honest ways early on, and the imperative to create adequate time to reflect alongside guest speakers and to do so outside of their presence. As a result of this interdisciplinary foundation, reflection time was scheduled to occur before and after each teacher.

My ministry context coupled with the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations led to the projected analyzed here, a project designed to increase multicultural awareness in a predominantly White church in Idaho. The hypothesis is: using the IES as a measurement tool and with the scholarly leadership of multiple guest teachers who are persons of color, a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho will develop increased multicultural awareness that prepares it to embrace a culturally-diverse community. This project is designed to respond to a problem of White homogeneity in congregations which are led by White pastors in the midst of

neighborhoods that show greater demographic variety. Such churches do not reflect the diversity of the communities in which they reside. While this project addresses a specific ministry context using specific guest teachers in a specific time frame, this project is a valuable instrument for creating multicultural awareness in other contexts, as well, through the larger church.

Methodology

The methodology for this study involved creating an adult learning environment for a group of voluntary participants (referred to as “students” throughout). These students attended their choice of several information sessions, completed a pre-test online, attended a class taught by me, attended seven classes taught by guest teachers, completed a post-test, and attended a final debrief class taught by me. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed to ascertain whether the model produced increased multicultural awareness in the students.

Data used to test the hypothesis of this project was received in a mixed-method format. As a method of quantitative data gathering called the IES—produced by the Kozai group and distributed by GlobeSmart—was utilized to measure multicultural awareness. Such a disposition was quantified by using scores in areas of continuous learning, interpersonal engagement, and hardiness.⁴ Each of these areas was parsed further in this way:

- Continuous learning: exploration and self-awareness
- Interpersonal engagement: world orientation and relationship development

⁴ Joyce Osland, *Understanding the IES Dimensions*.

- Hardiness: positive regard and resilience⁵

The IES utilized pre-determined items accessed through an online platform that used a Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The tool was utilized in the privacy of each student’s home at their leisure.

Data management and confidentiality was handled in the following manner. For the online pre-test and post-test, access for students was set-up using an online portal designed by the Kozai Group—who administers these exams worldwide. The participant received email invitations, then used their email address to access the online form. The student’s name and email were collected by the Kozai Group on their secure socket layer website. The pre-test and post-test were processed there. After completion, the Kozai Group emailed an individual report to the student and an anonymous group-comparison report to me. Reports had identifiable data removed. Names were replaced with participant numbers.

In addition to the collection of quantitative data, a qualitative measure was employed on a weekly basis. Students were verbally asked three questions in a group interview format following each guest teacher presentation. Answers were voluntary. Not all students answered each time, and the recorder inside the Zoom video conferencing platform was disabled during the reflection time. The questions were the same each week and addressed students’ perceived changes in their understanding of culture. The interview questions were:

1. During today's presentation, what new insights did you gain about church and culture?

⁵ Joyce Osland, *Understanding the IES Dimensions*.

2. What surprised you today as you heard from our guest teacher?
3. What practices do you feel should be implemented in the local church as a result of your learning? Are there areas you feel action needs to be taken?

The first question invited students to share any new insights or learning points that arose in their time with the guest teacher. The second question provided insight into whether their initial understanding was challenged and was a way of addressing the discomfort cited by authors cited in the interdisciplinary chapter. The third question provided insight into a student's willingness to name a new action, suggest a new practice, or engage in the goal of creating a multicultural church as a result of a shift in understanding. Regarding the confidentiality of qualitative data, weekly debriefing sessions, using interview questions, were done verbally in a group setting, so participants could be identified by each other and hear other's responses.

Implementation

Once the methodology was researched and established, students registered and guest teachers were selected. The project was designed as an in-person event; however, the pandemic demanded use of a video-conferencing platform (in our case, Zoom). Prior to launch, this was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Though made for health reasons, the change made it easy to include more students. It also made it easier to enlist uniquely gifted, non-local teachers. The impact of this change will be discussed in more depth in the summary of learnings to follow.

The first step in implementation was the recruiting of potential students. Invitations were provided via in-worship announcements and by way of a church-wide

newsletter to adults affiliated with the Amity Campus at 4464 South Maple Grove Road in Boise, Idaho. The invitations utilized are included in Appendix A. Participation was fully voluntary with no inducement. From the inception of the project, participants (or research subjects) were referred to as “students” to emphasize the learning nature of the experience and place additional value on the unique “teachers” coming to offer presentations each week.

Interested students were asked to attend one of three Zoom-based information sessions. During the informational session, the following qualifications for participation were given:

- Students must be connected to the Amity Campus as an in-person attendee or online attendee.
- Students must be at least 18 years of age.
- Students must sign an Informed Consent Form prior to the first session, as it is a research project.
- Spouses may both participate, but must sign separate forms and do the pre-test and post-test separately.
- Access to Zoom.
- Students should come with an open mind, be willing to be challenged by new ideas, and to share in a group learning experience.

There were no pregnant women, minors, prisoners, cognitively impaired subjects, or other members of a vulnerable population among the students. The group was reminded of the importance of remaining fully engaged with 100% attendance unless an emergency took place.

After the students were recruited, I set up the IES instrument using their online portal, and all students completed an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix). These were collected electronically, printed, and stored in a locked file cabinet.

Simultaneous to the recruitment of students, I researched and invited guest teachers. Guest teachers were selected after consultation with experts in this field from our Oregon-Idaho and Pacific Northwest Annual Conference offices. Kristina Gonzalez, a professional associate and expert in the field of adult education in multicultural church, provided many excellent recommendations. The guest teachers were not chosen specifically for their race or ethnicity, but for their expertise in their field, their licensure, UMC ordination status, and willingness to share their personal story of culture and church. Be that as it may, all guest teachers were persons of color and ministry professionals with master's or doctoral degrees in some form of ministry. I was the only White teacher.

Guest teachers were given great latitude in their topic choice, as the intent of the project was to honor voices of color. Teachers were asked to begin by sharing their story, expertise, passion, and vision. They were asked to address the best practices for the church to connect to a diverse community and the barriers to be expected there. Teachers were encouraged to be truth-tellers, honest, and challenging. They were encouraged not to worry about offending people but instead share from their heart in any way they felt God called them to share. They were provided with the option of using on-screen graphics, music, or videos.

Teachers were given flexibility, and encouraged to speak from their heart, but some requested more guidance. The following prompts were offered:

- Who are you? What pronouns do you use? How do you identify yourself from a cultural perspective?
- Where do you serve? What is the community like?
- What is your call story? How did you end up in ministry?
- What is your ministry expertise? Feel free to share any books, seminar topics, or promotional material.
- Where have you or others encountered racism, White supremacy, and/or White privilege in the church?
- What must a homogeneous church do to more fully embody the Imago Dei and connect to a more diverse community?

Speakers were encouraged to share their story and the group was challenged in the informational sessions and via a signed covenant to receive these stories with honor and kindness, recognizing the pain that can be involved in sharing. Great care was given to creating safe space for sharing.

Thirty potential students for this study attended an informational session. Twenty-nine students chose to enroll, and one dropped early. The remaining cohort completed the Informed Consent process, took the IES Pre-Test, and attended class the first week. Two students eventually withdrew from the study: one because of COVID, and another in response to a family challenge. As a result, twenty-seven participants completed the study ($n=27$) and are included in the results that follows. Info from the three students who dropped out is not included in the final data set.

Two Students were project context associates: Colonel Phil Burch (retired) and Donna Burch. They were active at the Amity Campus and familiar with the local church

and its surrounding community. The professional associate, Dr. Iain Sturrock, was in the group, too.

Co-variables in this study were pre-determined by the IES instrument and included age, sex, education, profession, linguistic ability, and travel history. Students reported on each of these areas using the IES instrument. Participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to early eighties, but 92.5% of them identified as fifty years of age or older at the time of the study. Of the twenty-seven participants, seventeen (approximately 63%) were women. All students reported completing some college. A majority possessed graduate degrees. All identified as White or European with the exception of one self-identifying as Latina and one as biracial.

The guest teacher-led classes involved 30 minutes of gathering, prayer, and the reading of a Psalm followed by questions. The guest teacher then logged in and spoke for approximately sixty minutes. When the guest teacher concluded, the group prayed for the teacher. The teacher exited the Zoom conference and the group continued with thirty minutes of debriefing and discussion, followed by the qualitative assessment questions listed in the previous section.

The entire time commitment from beginning to end for a student/participant is listed as follows:

- Informational Session: a 30-minute description of the project, sharing requirements for participation, and addressing anxiety and reflection
- IES pre-test—to be completed no less than 24 hours before the first class.
- Week one: Voluntary introductions of participants to each other, sharing of prayer requests, a Psalm reading, and prayer time. I addressed the

foundational aspects of the project, summarized the Ministry Focus, and highlighted the differing demographics of the church and its surrounding community. I discussed Paul's exposition in Galatians. Significant time was given to framing the church as a force for White privilege and racism throughout history. liberation theology was discussed, with an emphasis on black liberation theology. Lastly, I addressed the interdisciplinary focus of adult education. We closed with a 30-minute debriefing on the IES pre-test.

- Week two: Reverend Sunia Gibbs.
- Week three: Reverend Joel Rodriguez.
- Week four: Reverend Kelvin Sauls.
- Week five: Reverend Dr. Kenneth Dantzler-Corbin.
- Week six: Reverend Darryl Burton.
- Week seven: Reverend John Go.
- IES Post-Test: Participants were given 48 hours after the completion of the seventh week to complete the IES assessment. Again, they received individual reports and I received a comparative summary.
- Week eight: I led a session debriefing the IES post-test using the Aperian Global and Kozai Group material, referenced in the previous chapter.

Summary of Learning

As stated previously, the primary objective of this project was to determine if the intervention (eight weeks of classes) was effective in increasing multicultural awareness. As such, each student completed the IES instrument before and after the intervention. All

data was de-identified prior to running the analysis. All students completed the IES instrument as a pre-test. The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 28* (SPSS) was used to conduct the quantitative data analysis. The results of the pre-test and post-test were provided by IES in the format below. The raw data producing these tables is found in Appendix C.

Figure 1. Pre-Test Results

	Low			Moderate			High	
	1	2		3	4	5	6	7
Continuous Learning	3	11		4	5	3	2	0
Self Awareness	5	5		8	3	4	3	0
Exploration	4	10		4	6	3	1	0
Interpersonal Engagement	0	7		3	4	8	4	2
World Orientation	0	1		8	5	3	9	2
Relationship Development	6	1		5	7	3	5	1
Hardiness	2	3		2	7	3	10	1
Positive Regard	2	1		0	3	10	8	4
Emotional Resilience	5	3		5	7	3	5	0
Overall Intercultural Effectiveness Scale	3	2		6	4	7	5	1

Figure 2. Post-Test Results

	Low			Moderate			High	
	1	2		3	4	5	6	7
Continuous Learning	0	3		2	3	3	7	8
Self Awareness	0	2		3	3	6	7	5
Exploration	1	3		3	1	6	5	7
Interpersonal Engagement	0	1		3	1	4	6	11
World Orientation	0	2		0	2	6	7	9
Relationship Development	0	2		2	1	6	12	3
Hardiness	1	1		3	2	1	4	14
Positive Regard	0	1		3	2	3	3	14
Emotional Resilience	2	2		1	3	7	3	8
Overall Intercultural Effectiveness Scale	0	3		1	1	2	6	13

These charts list the number of scores in each of the 3 main categories (Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness) as well as the six sub-categories (Self-Awareness, Exploration, World Orientation, Relationship Development, Positive

Regard, and Emotional Resilience) on both the pre-test and the post-test. At first glance, it is clear the scores have increased from the pre-test to post-test, but a test for statistical significance was needed.

Kent State University's SPSS online resource library provided guidance on statistical tests to consider when evaluating this type of pre-test and post-test model. An article entitled, "SPSS Tutorials: Paired Samples T-Test," suggested a t-Test was the appropriate statistic for this application. The authors described the statistic in this manner:

The Paired Samples t-Test compares the means of two means of two measurements taken from the same individual, object, or related units. These 'paired' measurements can represent things like . . . a measurement taken at two different times (pre-test and post-test score with an intervention administered between the two time points) . . . The purpose of the test is to determine whether there is statistical significance that the mean difference between paired observations is significantly different from zero.⁶

So guided, I chose a Paired Sample T-Test to analyze the results to determine the statistical significance using the IES results.

S. A. McLeod's article, "What a p-value tells you about statistical significance" appearing in *Simple Psychology*, stated that "one mechanism for determining the probability that an outcome occurred by random chance is by calculating a p-value or significance level."⁷ In other words, assigning a p-value ahead of time could help the researcher determine statistical significance. In this doctoral project, a target p-value was not established prior to the intervention. Even without a p-value assigned ahead of time,

⁶ University Libraries, "SPSS Tutorials: Paired Samples T Test" (Kent State University, Kent, OH) <https://libguides.library.kent.edu/spss/pairedsamplesttest>.

⁷ Saul McLeod, "What a p-value tells you about statistical significance" in *Simple Psychology*, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/p-value.html> (May, 2019).

McLeod affirms that, “A *p*-value less than 0.05 (typically < 0.05) is statistically significant.”⁸

Utilizing the IES pre-test and post-test as a paired sample, a Paired Sample t-Test provided an analysis of the difference of the means between the overall IES pre-test results and the overall IES post-test results. The difference was statistically significant with $P = .001$. This shows strong support for the intervention’s effectiveness in increasing multicultural awareness.

In addition, a Paired Sample T-Test was performed on each of the six sub-categories. The difference again was statistically significant with $P = .001$ on each sub-category with the exception of Self-Awareness. The difference in the Self-Awareness sub-category was $P = .007$. According to McLeod, “a *p*-value higher than 0.05 (>0.05) is not statistically significant and indicates strong evidence for the null hypothesis.” As a result, the Self-Awareness sub-category showed less statistical significance than the other five sub-categories; but the project increased multicultural awareness in a statistically significant manner in areas including Self-Awareness.

Intercultural Communication Studies published “The Development and Validation of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale” by University of Rhode Island’s Tamra Portalla and Gui-Ming Chen. Regarding intercultural competence, they said, the IES, “can be conceptualized as an individual’s ability to achieve their communication goal while effectively and appropriately utilizing communication behaviors to negotiate between the different identities present within a culturally diverse environment.”⁹ From

⁸ Saul McLeod, “What a *p*-value tells you about statistical significance.”

⁹ Tamra Portalla and Guo-Ming Chen, “The Development and Validation of the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale” in *Intercultural Communication Studies XIX: 3, 2010*,

this perspective, the learnings from the IES in this research study provide support for increased ability for participants to use communication in diverse settings. As a result, the impact for the Amity Campus (and other future applications) meets the goals of the study to increase multicultural awareness.

Learnings from the qualitative data emphasized this, as well. Through analysis of the verbal responses to the weekly closing debrief questions, I observed specific themes emerge. Responses to the following three weekly interview questions are quoted in Table 1, below.

1. During today's presentation, what new insights did you gain about church and culture?
2. What surprised you today as you heard from our guest speaker?
3. What practices do you feel should be implemented in the local church as a result of your learning? Are there areas you feel action needs to be taken?

The raw responses reveal the values of the participants. Their words attest to a perceived sense of increasing multicultural awareness. This qualitative data will form the basis for addressing the themes that surfaced.

Table 1: Interview Question Responses

Week	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I understood we were one church without regard to culture, but that is not the case. It is deeply cultural.” • “The church history is very interesting. The background of a divided church makes sense now.” • “I learned new definitions today of racism, systemic racism, privilege, and White fragility.” • “I developed new insight into the aspect of White privilege today. I did not think it was real or impacted others. This was a real step forward.” • “I had no idea White people had ushered black people out of churches in our history.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I was surprised about the impact of White images of Jesus.” • “I was surprised by the way White people forced blacks to leave the church.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We must change our imagery of Jesus immediately.” • “We must invest in multi-lingual worship.” • “We need to find ways to create cultural inclusion of music in worship.” • “We have to force ourselves to be more accepting. I am ready.”
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I began to see how different we really are.” • “Being adopted can even create cultural differences.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I was surprised cross-cultural adoption does not involve teaching culture.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We need to examine new models of ministry.” • “We must hear the need for change.” • “We should avoid words like ‘they’ and ‘them’ in our ministry. Instead, we must listen to understand.”

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Greeting a person in their own language at church is critical.” “We should worry less about singing Spanish songs and instead worry about hearing the voices of those in other cultures themselves.” “We must try new things.” “We need to walk further into the community.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I was surprised how easy it is for the church to return to old wineskins.” “I noticed how little we consider what language or worship style someone else prefers, a style that matches their culture.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Churches need to walk beyond the periphery of faith and partner with the community.” “We need to expand worship to include a variety of cultural additions.” “Walking and talking in the community is the key response.” “We must intentionally create ways of sharing across culture.”
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As a White person, I have never had this experience of seeing our culture through the eyes of others.” “Growing and being with people is what we must be about.” “We need to truly be a welcoming denomination instead of a White, fat, and happy one.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I saw how clearly ideology and theology are connected.” “Today’s story broke my heart to see how we can act.” “Ideology is woven into our theology. It must be unraveled to avoid systematic oppression.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Churches must be intentional about developing empathy.” “This study is providing such a service to us gain new perspective. These stories must be heard by a larger church population.” “Our denomination needs to be open to cross-cultural appointments.” “Churches must say <i>sawabona</i> meaning “I see you and acknowledge you.””
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Forgiveness has cultural implications as well. It may come from God, but is manifest in culture.” “Carrying around hate infects every relationship we have, especially those with cultural implications.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It is painful to know the church cannot create safe space for persons of all cultures.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Churches must practice being quiet and learn active listening.” “I would never have said this at the beginning, but maybe churches need multiple pastors with intentionally different cultural backgrounds.” “Music has been a part of every teacher’s journey. We must engage multicultural music more effectively.”
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Today is a story of White privilege. Had the teacher been White, the entire dynamic would have been different.” “Recidivism ends when the church becomes involved.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I was surprised neither the government or churches help people who have been incarcerated unfairly.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The church must move past its fear and work harder to overcome prejudice.” “We must find ways to have the church be in the community.”
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I never recognized atonement theory could be interpreted differently based upon culture.” “It was painful to hear a perception that a church with a BIPOC pastor got second best.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Our teacher showed us how to re-think sacred space through a cultural lens.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Multicultural education in churches is critical.” “It all comes down to multicultural education.” “How we teach people in issues related to culture matters.” “We must take steps to be a relational church.”

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I know our heart, but White male pastors may have trouble creating multicultural churches.” • “I was surprised how much my scores improved across the board. But, the greater learning was a new awareness that came from hearing our guest teachers. I was not initially willing to listen but this created in me a desire to learn more.” • “Multicultural church lasts longer. The church and politics must go together.” • “Seeing the history of the UMC this close causes me to see why we have so many issues today.” • “I understand so much more about our background and connection to racism within the church.” • How we present Jesus matters. We need to be honest about culture and how Jesus confronted cultural issues.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am surprised at the institutional racism that still exists in the church.” • “Today surprised me and broke my heart. The web of relationships here is immensely important. We are sowing seeds here today.” • “I am surprised Methodism in its current form has few Easters left.” • “I was surprised that not one speaker claimed to be a victim. They were kind and courageous.” • “I was surprised at how much relationship and perspective I have gained.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We need to physically take a trip and learn from churches who do multicultural ministry well.” • “This study must be repeated for more people.” • “This study needs to be an ongoing small group that includes more and more people. It has helped me greatly.” • “The most meaningful instructor for me was Rev. Sauls who introduced the concept of ‘sawaboney.’ We need to learn how to see others clearly and see their culture as a gift.” • “The church must re-think before it ever enters its four walls. If we have not asked ourselves how we need to change, it is too early to return.” • “We must have a study group on history as a UMC so we understand the racist roots.” • “We must refute the idea that politics and church cannot go together.” • “The discussion with these incredible people has changed my mind. Pastors should not be afraid to encourage the hard discussions. We have addressed it in a civil 8 weeks. The church needs courage.” • “We must educate ourselves now.”
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In the responses to question one, two themes become apparent. First, students were surprised by the church’s racist history. This was made clear to the students by the project’s historical foundation information and from the guest teacher’s stories. The second theme that developed was a recognition that the church can sometimes erase culture and misinterpret the biblical foundation in this document. Students frequently expressed an increasing value for diverse culture.

An analysis of question two produced three points of learning. First, students articulated a new-found awareness of the White-influenced imagery of the church and expressed a desire to create more inclusive imagery. Second, students often expressed pain, emotional struggle, and frustration at the broken relationship that exists between the church and the non-White community. Third, the students honored the guest teachers by noting that they did not define themselves as victims, but as survivors.

In analyzing the answers to question three, two main themes emerged. First, a desire for increased education and a wider population of people to study this topic was prevalent throughout. Second, students expressed a desire for forms of ministry, music, and religious education that focused on multicultural relationship-building.

Given these themes in light of the quantitative data, it can be concluded that both the quantitative data and the qualitative data support the hypothesis: Using the IES as a measurement tool and with the scholarly leadership of multiple guest teachers who are persons of color, a culturally homogeneous church in Idaho will develop increased multicultural awareness that prepares it to embrace a culturally diverse community. The increase in multicultural awareness for students was exhibited both statistically and through their own verbal responses to debrief questions.

Recommendations for Future Study

Despite the impact and statistical significance of this research project, consideration must be given to the ability of others to replicate this project and receive the same results. There are implications here for future study and research that could benefit similar homogeneous churches located in diverse neighborhoods. I would recommend some adjustments, however, to improve the effectiveness of the project.

First, I would suggest these classes be planned on Zoom from the beginning—even in a non-COVID time frame—rather than use Zoom as a fallback position due to pandemic. Having access to non-local, high-quality teachers impacted this study in a positive way. If only local teachers, it is uncertain if the same result would have taken place. I strongly encourage use of the online format to provide access to the highest quality teachers possible, regardless of location.

Second, I would encourage future researchers to refine the qualitative questions to allow for more specific responses. For example, question three asked for an action the church should take rather than an action the individual student might take. Creating more personal commitment through a specific action on the student's part could create more impact post-study than simply asking what the church should do. This was lacking in the current study as students often times suggested what the church or what others should do but did not, as often, define their own role in increasing multicultural awareness. Such adjustments to the questions may benefit future study.

Thirdly, given the participants were all of similar ethnicity, similar educational background, and attended the same church likely biased the study. As was visible in the data, those that chose to participate knew the content, were mostly educated with some college, and had some passion or interest for the topic. If this study were to be run again, I would suggest a more diverse sample. That said, many United Methodist Churches are composed mostly of White seniors, so, from this perspective, perhaps the study is indicative of the general United Methodist population at this time.

Fourth, when this concept of this project was in its initial stages of exploration, the language regarding “teachers” and “classes” was not yet in place. This language was

added later as the interdisciplinary foundation was established. This was critical to the development of the study as it changed the role, intentionally, of the guest from “speaker” or “pastor” to “teacher.” In the eyes of college-educated adults, changing their identity and paradigm to “student” and the guest to “teacher” created an added status from which the guest teachers could speak. It is critical to support the guest teacher as an expert in the field for much more than their skin color. These were true educated ministry professionals who were also non-White. Invoking their role as an expert is important in a nearly all-White student group with embedded lack of multicultural awareness.

Fifth, significant attention must be given to selection of guest teachers. While this research study involved a specific roster of guest teachers, this specific roster is not required to re-create this study elsewhere. In fact, the reasons the personal stories of the guest teachers are not published in this dissertation are two-fold. In order to respect their privacy and honor the courage and vulnerability of the guest teachers, their stories are theirs to share, not mine as a researcher. In addition, this project benefitted from intentional diversity among the guest teachers. This diversity of background and experience can be replicated with intentionality if this study were to be re-created in a different ministry context. As a result, this dissertation suggests criteria for these guest teachers in your location and Appendix E suggests guiding questions to offer potential guest teachers.

Conclusion

Despite the impact and statistical significance of this research project, attention is given to the way it shaped me as the creator of the concept. Even as United Methodist

Clergy, trained in years of seminary, I was unaware of the extent to which racism, White supremacy, and privilege have impacted the denomination and local church I love. By preparing to teach a week myself and by learning from our guest teachers, my paradigm changed as well. I began to see terms I have used my entire career, such as “traditional worship,” were, in the end, filled with embedded racism. After all, I led “traditional worship” for decades only to hear a guest teacher in my project remind me that the music I loved was only traditional to White churches. It was in these moments I became more than a researcher and a teacher, I became convicted in my own Whiteness. I desired to know more, to hear the stories, and to challenge myself to live into my role as pastor more focused on justice-seeking. I urge any potential church that chooses to embrace this work to be ready for personal profound change, change that sometimes convicts our own understanding of “church.”

I learned a great deal in this undertaking. First and foremost, I learned a structured approach to adult education in the church arena that can positively affect church culture. I also learned that the need for such a change is much greater than I had anticipated. Participants expressed a deep desire to “right the wrongs” of history by acknowledging our faith tradition’s role in systematic oppression. One of the most powerful learnings I experienced is a reminder that the integration of diverse cultures in a church atmosphere should never happen because persons of color need a White church. Rather, the reason is that the homogenous White church needs to reflect the image of God by refracting it through a biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary lens. With further study and practice, White homogeneous churches can grow in their multicultural awareness through listening and reflecting.

I close by offering deep thanks on behalf of all the participants in this study and to the guest teachers who served as ministry professionals. Your commitment to grow together and learn has benefitted one local homogeneous predominantly white church in Idaho with increased multicultural awareness. I pray this work is a gift to the larger church such that we might all combat racism in all forms and especially in our local churches.

APPENDIX A
PARTICIPANT INVITATIONS

Online Worship Announcement

Are you interested in multi-cultural expressions of church? Do you feel called to justice ministries? Are you interested in a multicultural vision for the Amity Campus and a better connection to our diverse community? If so, participate in Pastor Rob's new small group called, "Multi-Cultural Church." This small group will be held on zoom and gives you the opportunity to learn, grow, and meet others including six guest teachers. The study is open to adults who are connected to the Amity Campus. This small group doubles as Pastor Rob's doctoral research project, so a consent form is required.

Information sessions are upcoming so visit the church website to register or email us at [redacted] and we will get you connected.

E-News Announcement

Are you interested in multi-cultural expressions of church? Do you feel called to justice ministries? Are you interested in a multicultural vision for the Amity Campus and a better connection to our diverse community? If so, participate in Pastor Rob's new small group called, "Multi-Cultural Church." This small group will be held on zoom and gives you the opportunity to learn, grow, and meet others including six guest teachers. The study is open to adults who are connected to the Amity Campus. This small group doubles as Pastor Rob's doctoral research project, so a consent form is required.

Information sessions are upcoming so click here for more detail and a registration form.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Researcher: Rev. Rob Walters

Academic Institution: United Theological Seminary

Context: Cathedral of the Rockies - Amity Campus, Boise, Idaho

Purpose of the Research

As part of this project, you will hear from the researcher (Rev. Rob Walters) for an opening and closing session. We will hear from 6 Guest teachers who are all ministry professionals and persons of color. Each will share their unique cultural experience in church. We will also have some voluntary dialogue each week after our guest speaker concludes. Plus, prior to the presentations and after the final presentation, we will take a pre-test and post-test called the "Intercultural Effectiveness Scale." You will complete this online and get an individual report. The researcher (Rev. Rob Walters) will receive an anonymous group comparison report. The purpose of our time together is to see if our anonymous group results on the pre-test improve by the time we reach the post-test. Together, we will learn more about multi-cultural church.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks to you.

Description of Benefits

By participating, the expected benefit to you as a participant is to grow in your awareness of the issues related to culture and church. For our church and community, the expected benefit is that a mostly homogeneous White church might more effectively relate to the diverse neighborhood we serve.

Disclosure of Appropriate Alternative Procedures or Courses of Treatment

None

Compensation, and Treatments

You will not be compensated as a participant. Our Guest teachers (excluding the researcher) will receive a small thank you gift from the group.

Information about the Confidentiality of Records

We will handle your private information in this way:

- This Informed Consent form will be retained by the researcher (Rev. Rob Walters).
- On Zoom, we will block additional people from joining our group, but your name will be visible to the persons in our group. We will not allow participants to record the classes, but the researcher will record only the portion where our guest speaker presents. This way, anyone with a last minute-absence can still get the information they missed. We will not record any of your dialogue. You are asked to participate on zoom in a private space.
- The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) is handled by the Kozai Group, a professional organization that does this testing worldwide. They will receive your

name and email from the researcher after which you will receive an email invitation. You will receive your individual results in email and the researcher will receive an anonymous comparison report. You can learn more about them here. <https://www.globesmart.com/products/intercultural-effectiveness-study/>.

Treatments

There is no suspected risk to you. If you feel uncomfortable at any time listening to discussions about culture and church or the discussion brings up feelings for you that are uncomfortable, you are free to leave that presentation. Your clergy (not just the researcher) are open to providing pastoral care if needed or suggest a local counselor that can discuss issues of culture more deeply if needed. Just ask.

Contact Information

Rev. Rob Walters

[redacted email]

[redacted phone]

Agreement

I agree to participate voluntarily in this small group study with Rev. Rob Walters, the church, and our Guest teachers. I recognize this is a research project for a doctor of ministry degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio and I understand that I may withdraw from the group at any time with no penalty to me.

Name of participant:

Signature of participant:

APPENDIX C
IES RAW DATA BY CATEGORY

IES Raw Data

Participant	Test	Continuous Learning	Self Awareness	Exploration	Interpersonal Engagement	World Orientation	Relationship Development	Hardiness	Positive Regard	Emotional Resilience	Overall IES
1	Pre	3.78	3.67	3.90	3.07	3.14	3.00	3.50	4.11	2.89	3.45
1	Post	4.46	4.22	4.70	4.26	4.14	4.38	4.56	4.78	4.33	4.43
2	Pre	4.36	4.22	4.50	3.02	2.29	3.75	3.89	3.78	4.00	3.76
2	Post	4.58	4.56	4.60	3.45	3.14	3.75	4.17	4.44	3.89	4.06
3	Pre	3.67	3.33	4.00	3.07	3.14	3.00	2.83	3.44	2.22	3.19
3	Post	3.73	3.67	3.80	3.46	3.43	3.50	2.78	3.11	2.44	3.33
4	Pre	3.94	3.78	4.10	3.88	4.14	3.63	3.28	3.44	3.11	3.70
4	Post	4.58	4.67	4.50	4.34	4.43	4.25	4.33	4.33	4.33	4.42
5	Pre	4.14	3.89	4.40	3.49	2.86	4.13	3.94	4.22	3.67	3.86
5	Post	4.78	4.56	5.00	4.50	4.00	5.00	4.61	4.78	4.44	4.63
6	Pre	3.75	3.00	4.50	3.43	2.86	4.00	3.61	3.89	3.33	3.60
6	Post	4.08	3.56	4.60	3.96	3.29	4.63	4.17	4.56	3.78	4.07
7	Pre	3.69	3.78	3.60	2.92	2.71	3.13	3.06	3.56	2.56	3.22
7	Post	3.74	3.78	3.70	3.02	2.29	3.75	3.22	3.56	2.89	3.33
8	Pre	2.94	2.89	3.00	2.98	2.71	3.25	2.39	2.44	2.33	2.77
8	Post	3.72	3.44	4.00	3.40	3.43	3.38	3.22	3.00	3.44	3.45
9	Pre	3.89	3.78	4.00	2.91	2.57	3.25	1.72	2.44	1.00	2.84
9	Post	4.62	4.33	4.90	3.98	3.71	4.25	2.22	2.89	1.56	3.61
10	Pre	4.21	4.22	4.20	3.98	3.71	4.25	3.83	4.44	3.22	4.01
10	Post	4.62	4.33	4.90	4.30	3.86	4.75	4.50	5.00	4.00	4.47
11	Pre	3.58	3.56	3.60	3.13	2.00	4.25	3.33	3.11	3.56	3.35
11	Post	3.89	3.89	3.90	3.45	2.14	4.75	3.89	4.00	3.78	3.74
12	Pre	3.62	3.44	3.80	3.57	3.14	4.00	3.83	4.11	3.56	3.68
12	Post	3.93	3.67	4.20	3.86	3.71	4.00	3.78	3.78	3.78	3.86
13	Pre	3.94	3.78	4.10	3.87	3.86	3.88	3.83	4.11	3.56	3.88
13	Post	4.10	4.00	4.20	3.91	3.57	4.25	4.56	4.78	4.33	4.19
14	Pre	4.17	4.33	4.00	3.41	2.57	4.25	4.50	4.78	4.22	4.03
14	Post	4.62	4.33	4.90	4.64	4.29	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75
15	Pre	4.42	4.44	4.40	4.14	4.29	4.00	3.33	3.67	3.00	3.97
15	Post	4.36	4.11	4.60	4.55	4.86	4.25	3.67	4.11	3.22	4.19

16	Pre	3.78	3.56	4.00	4.08	4.29	3.88	3.06	3.67	2.44	3.64
16	Post	4.11	4.11	4.10	4.68	4.86	4.50	3.22	3.78	2.67	4.00
17	Pre	4.10	4.00	4.20	4.01	4.14	3.88	3.39	3.67	3.11	3.83
17	Post	4.62	4.44	4.80	4.32	4.14	4.50	3.44	3.44	3.44	4.13
18	Pre	4.37	4.44	4.30	4.31	4.00	4.63	3.72	3.33	4.11	4.14
18	Post	4.84	4.78	4.90	4.59	4.43	4.75	3.83	3.00	4.67	4.42
19	Pre	4.31	4.11	4.50	4.81	5.00	4.63	4.06	4.11	4.00	4.39
19	Post	4.57	4.44	4.70	4.69	5.00	4.38	4.61	4.89	4.33	4.62
20	Pre	3.64	2.89	4.40	3.98	3.71	4.25	3.61	3.78	3.44	3.75
20	Post	4.73	4.56	4.90	4.65	4.43	4.88	4.33	4.56	4.11	4.57
21	Pre	3.82	3.33	4.30	3.13	3.00	3.25	3.78	3.56	4.00	3.57
21	Post	4.51	4.22	4.80	4.17	3.71	4.63	4.72	4.56	4.89	4.47
22	Pre	3.83	3.67	4.00	3.61	2.71	4.50	3.39	4.00	2.78	3.61
22	Post	4.84	4.89	4.80	3.96	3.29	4.63	4.17	4.56	3.78	4.32
23	Pre	3.74	3.78	3.70	3.99	3.86	4.13	3.83	4.00	3.67	3.85
23	Post	4.32	4.33	4.30	4.59	4.43	4.75	4.17	4.33	4.00	4.36
24	Pre	3.73	3.56	3.90	3.99	3.86	4.13	4.06	4.44	3.67	3.92
24	Post	4.24	3.89	4.60	4.30	3.86	4.75	4.22	4.67	3.78	4.26
25	Pre	4.46	4.22	4.70	4.65	4.43	4.88	3.50	3.56	3.44	4.20
25	Post	4.41	4.22	4.60	4.59	4.43	4.75	3.50	3.44	3.56	4.17
26	Pre	4.04	3.78	4.30	4.39	4.29	4.50	3.78	4.00	3.56	4.07
26	Post	4.67	4.33	5.00	4.66	4.57	4.75	4.33	4.78	3.89	4.55
27	Pre	3.24	2.89	3.60	3.38	3.00	3.75	3.50	3.78	3.22	3.37
27	Post	4.41	4.11	4.70	4.52	4.29	4.75	4.00	4.11	3.89	4.31

APPENDIX D

WEEKLY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Weekly Reflection Questions for Discussion

1. During today's educational session, what new insights did you gain about church and culture?
2. What surprised you today as you heard from our guest teacher?
3. What practices do you feel should be implemented in the local church as a result of your learning? Are there areas you feel action needs to be taken?

APPENDIX E
GUEST TEACHER GUIDING QUESTIONS

Guest Teacher Guiding Questions

- Who are you? What are the appropriate pronouns to use for you? How do you identify yourself from a cultural perspective?
- Where do you serve? What is the community like?
- What is your call story? How did you end up in ministry?
- What is your ministry expertise? Feel free to share any books, speaking seminars, or anything you want to promote.
- How have you seen examples of racism, White supremacy, and White privilege either personally or in others in the life of the church?
- What must a homogeneous church do to more fully embody the *imago Dei* and more effectively connect to a more diverse community?

APPENDIX F
THE INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE

The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale

Direction: Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = uncertain

2 = disagree blank before the statement

1 = strongly disagree

- 1. I find it is easy to talk with people from different cultures.
- 2. I am afraid to express myself when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 3. I find it is easy to get along with people from different cultures.
- 4. I am not always the person I appear to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 5. I am able to express my ideas clearly when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 6. I have problems with grammar when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 7. I am able to answer questions effectively when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 8. I find it is difficult to feel my culturally different counterparts are similar to me.
- 9. I use appropriate eye contact when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 10. I have problems distinguishing between informative and persuasive messages when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 11. I always know how to initiate a conversation when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 12. I often miss parts of what is going on when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 13. I feel relaxed when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 14. I often act like a very different person when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 15. I always show respect for my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 16. I always feel a sense of distance with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 17. I find I have a lot in common with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 18. I find the best way to act is to be myself when interacting with people from different cultures.
- 19. I find it is easy to identify with my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.
- 20. I always show respect for the opinions of my culturally different counterparts during our interaction.

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